Milestone 1

There are a lot of graphic designers. This indicates that there is demand for graphic design services.

To stand out, as a beginner, it is important to create new ways of delivering value to clients without necessarily relying on methods and techniques that have been used over and over by other designers.

Since everyone is doing the same thing, it is important to ask ourselves, '**how can we do things differently?**'

This short read is a simple guide on how and where to get started.

Specifically, I will talk about the process of learning, it includes.

- skill acquisition,
- feedback as a tool for gauging yourself, and
- networking.

I have summarized it and made it simple enough.

Skill acquisition

To make money, you need to deliver value or simply, provide service to a client.

First, **learn a skill**.

Most 'beginners' fall into the trap of spending time learning skills that don't address the challenges clients have.

This common miscalculation is often caused by taking advice from social media gurus, who offer all sorts of advice that don't specifically apply to everyone.

Before you start learning a skill, ensure that you know beforehand;

- Your target client
- The challenges they go through
- How you aim to solve their problem.

This is the process.

Most people go the other way round, they learn a skill first, then try to find clients, which normally doesn't work because they end up realizing that their skill set does not match or is not perfectly aligned to the needs of the client.

Start here today. (Write this down)

i.   *Identify 1 client/person you would like to work with.*
ii. *Make a list of the challenges they go through.*
iii. *Come up with a rough idea of how you can solve it.*
iv. *What do you need to learn to be able to solve it?*
v.   *Once you have established what you need to learn, start learning.*

Hopefully, at this point, you already have a clue of who your prospective client is, their challenges and what they need.

Also, you have determined what skills you need to have to be able to solve the needs of your client.

And, don't get me wrong, solving a problem does not mean solving an enormous one. It simply means delivering a service that fulfills the need of your client.

It may be a need for a good logo, poster, mock up etc. All these are needs, the more skills you gain through your creative journey, the more problems you will be able to identify and solve.

Since you have already completed milestone 1, you can transfer your ideas into this table to keep them organized.
This will make it easy to track your progress and ideas.

	Question	Ideas
1.	Client / person I would like to work with. *(Can be anyone from any niche or industry)*	
2.	What challenges do they go through? *(for example need of content for online advertisement)*	
3.	How can I solve it? *(creating visually appealing graphics that spark excitement)*	
4.	What skill do I need to learn to be able to solve it? *(2D visual design)*	

Today's milestone, will be;

Brushing up your portfolio.

Milestone 2

Brushing up your portfolio

The Get set – Ready -Go mentality in learning.

A belief among most beginners is that; one has to fully master every detail and fundamental before they can network, engage with clients and make money.

This is false. You do not need to know everything.

In my opinion, the only difference between an expert and a beginner is delivery.
An expert will deliver outcomes that meet the desired needs of the client while a beginner will most likely not deliver desired results.

What sets the two apart is **skill**.

The difference btwn an expert and a beginner	
Expert	**Beginner**
Delivers what satisfies the client's needs	Does not posses sufficient amount of skill to deliver the desired output.
Has a deep network with clients, collegues and other professionals.	Does not have deep network with clients, collegues and professionals.
Has a distinct skillset that sets him/her apart from competitors.	Has not yet distinctified themselves from their competitors.

This however, does not mean that a beginner cannot **think** and **operate** like an expert.
In fact, it is possible to operate like an expert even as a beginner – the goal is to become an expert right? Talk and act like one.

Get set

Step 1
Create a portfolio.

Things to note when crafting your portfolio.

- Your portfolio is a story about yourself.
- Your portfolio is what sets you apart from competitors.\
- Link your portfolio to the needs of your client.

Now that we know a portfolio is a story about yourself *(you as the main character)*, make it as unique and interesting as possible.
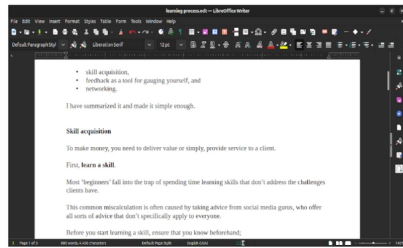
Below is a bad example of a portfolio *(example by me).*

As you study it, try to identify the mistakes *(what it lacks,what it needs and how it can be improved).*
When you find the answers to these, **use those ideas to craft your very own portfolio**.

Alphonce Ochieng Portfolio

The Creative Process.

Alphonce as a writer.

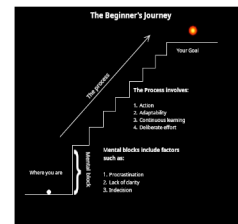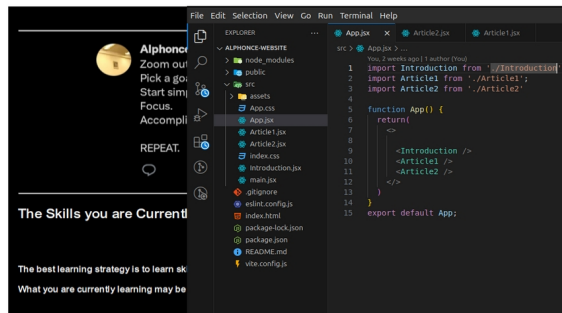Writing articles, blogs, social media content, educational content and advertisement statements.

2D designs

Posters,
Logos,
Banners,
Flyers
...and many more.
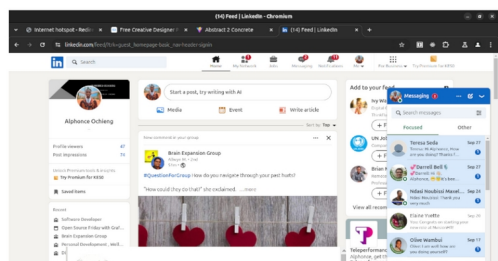

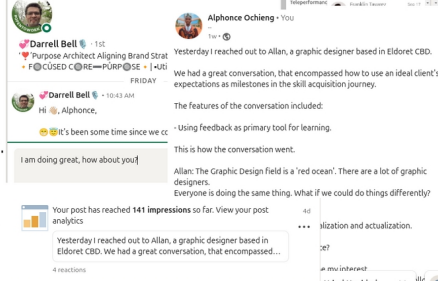Front-end web development.

Alphonce as a Social Media Personality

Social media content writing,

blog posts,

social media management.
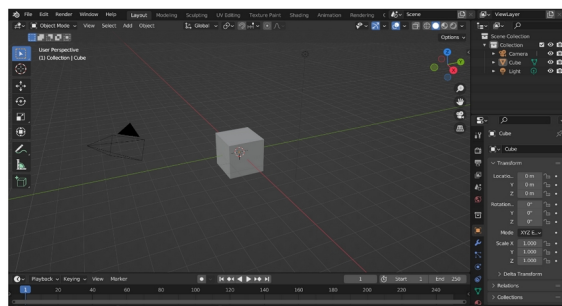
Active audience engagement.

3D Designs

I will share a good example in the next article.

2D and 3D Projects

Posters

Presentations

3D Projects

Meanwhile, grab your pen and a notebook and **get set**.

Delivering New Value: Setting yourself apart

Setting yourself apart is the most daunting challenge of every creative's journey.

This is because as a beginner, you do not have the right amount of experience, network and influence to make yourself a distinct figure in your niche.

It is often very easy to be overlooked by clients and other professionals when you do not have a distinct offer that makes you stand out from the rest of the crowd.

Every creative however, has an innate ability to stand out.

Through unhindered creativity and authenticity, we can all posses this supernatural gift and reap from the benefits of being 'misfits'.

The problem with most creatives however, is imitation.

When people imitate, they experience a false impression that they are doing something meaningful, when in real sense they are simply stealing the ideas of other people.

Due to fear of being criticized and standing up for their own ideas, they end up never expressing them freely, leading to loss of self confidence. Eventually, their ideas fail to see the light, remaining buried forever.

The result, inexperience and an unfulfilled life.

Today there are so many creatives. Everyone is doing almost the same thing based on trends and client preferences.

If everyone is doing the same thing for the same client needs, then why is everyone not making the same income?

Why do some creatives attract many clients and make a lot of income while others make little to none?

Designing has become very popular, with rising demands and huge benefits.

A huge chunk of flesh has been thrown into sea and every fish is trying to bite. How large they bite depends on the size of the fish's mouth which definitely depends on the size of the fish itself.

Many tend to imagine that as a beginner one has be patient, bite on the tiny pieces and hope that someday they will grow big and have a mouth large enough to bite larger pieces.

The same sea has a 5 cm long - five year old fish, and a 5m long - 5 month fish.

What does this mean?

It means that the idea of being patient and simply waiting, hoping that in time you will grow to a desired size, so that you can start enjoying benefits like others, is total BS.

Step 2

In the previous chapter, we talked about creating your portfolio.

At this point, hopefully, you are collecting all the scattered pieces and starting to make sense of the random thoughts that were constantly bombarding in your mind.

So far you have:

- ✔ *Identified 1 client/person you would like to work with*
- ✔ *Made a list of the challenges they go through*
- ✔ *Come up with a rough idea of how you can solve it*
- ✔ *Determined what you need to learn to be able to solve it?*
- ✔ *Established what you need to learn, started learning.*
- ✔ *Collected your projects and turned them into a story to serve as your own portfolio.*

Congrats for making it this far.

The second step of this challenge involves creating a value proposition.

This is the most critical aspect of this challenge.
It will determine whether your target gives you attention and proceeds to offer you benefits in exchange of your services or simply ignores you.

Your portfolio speaks about **you**, but your value proposition speaks about **your target** and **how you intend to influence their story**.

Know the difference between the two.

This is to say that a portfolio is not enough to convince your target.
Your target does not care about how many accolades you have accumulated. They care about how you intend to benefit them.

A value proposition is critical. It requires more attention and depth.

Key example:

A student couldn't stop making noise in class. His noise not only bothered his classmates, but also distracted them causing them to not study properly resulting to a low general class performance.

When the matter was called to the attention of the class teacher, he was furious. He swore to report the case to the school disciplinary committee for severe punishment.

On that evening, the teacher did not have much to do and so had the time to think about alternative solutions.
After thinking for a while, he came up with a solution. One that would change the life of the boy and that of other learners forever.

So he called the boy to his office, asked him to sit and gave him a pen and a leaflet. He asked him to write in detail all the things he would like to have in life.

The boy wrote: (pic)

When he was done, the teacher analyzed it carefully before asking the boy to read it aloud .

As the boy was reading, the teacher noticed the conviction in his tone, it was subtle, but really it was there.

After he was done, the teacher said, 'All these things that you wish to have are really great, everyone wishes to have them too, I included. It because they are amazing, magnificent and a true reflection of hard work, humility and persistence.'

'I share the same dream as you. I cherish and hold them dear to myself. And I know that you too hold them dear to yourself and wouldn't dare let anyone take them from you, right?'

To which the boy replied, 'that's right'.

'I spoke to your classmates this afternoon, and asked them to maintain a calm and tranquil environment that is conducive enough to enable you make the realization of your dreams possible. They agreed and as a matter of fact, most of them also promised to also assist in whatever way they can.'

'That would be really great, imagine the entire class – young bright individuals teaming up to help one another make their dreams come true. Everyone is already on the go right now, and one thing that I can promise is that they will definitely achieve their dreams with that spirit.

I am sure you are so excited to join your classmates in this amazing journey. You are intelligent and full of ideas, now go and share you ideas about achieving dreams with your classmates, I am sure they are eager to hear.'

At this point, tears almost filled the boy's eyes, it was subtle but it was there.

The name of that boy is the name of the writer of this book.

And that speech by my class teacher, is what turned me from a rebel to a contributor. From a sore misfit to a creator of ideas that simply transformed the way I related with people in class, to becoming an individual who shares knowledge and ideas to help others transform their lives.

The teacher spoke so little of his story or that of the class. He only talked about mine and how the class would help me transform it. And when he asked me to contribute to assist to transform that of the class, I could not resist, I easily obliged. It felt more like a role than an order or command.

How did I benefit? A lot.
How did the the class benefit? A lot

21 savage.