Balancing Act: Multitasking Strategies for Independent Professionals

By **Hannah Curran** - April 19, 2019

Watch our for your keyboard!

Isn't it every freelancer's dream to have a roster chock-full of clients? Attracting – and keeping – clients requires a certain level of professionalism, enthusiasm, and, of course, skill. So it feels like you've hit the freelancer jackpot when you have a busy schedule and are making extra money to spare.

But what happens when you have too much work? You get stressed, burnt out, and so overwhelmed that something's bound to slip through the cracks.

"When you're working with one company, in-house, you have a boss that sets your timelines and deadlines and organizes a lot of it for you," says Brittany Berger, freelance content marketing strategist and founder of Work Brighter, a productivity community. "As a freelancer, not only do you lack that, but you also are now dealing with multiple companies, types of projects, systems, and timelines. There's more to keep track of, and less help doing so, so you really need to be proactive about it."

Below, Berger shares her tips for managing expectations, staying organized, and juggling multiple projects at once.

1. Time yourself.

There are only 24 hours in a day, so it's important to use your time wisely. Since you can't work around the clock – you have to eat, sleep, and exercise – evaluate how much time each client is taking up.

"Track all of your work time, even if you don't charge clients on an hourly basis," Berger recommends. "Even if it's just for one month, this gives you a benchmark of how long different projects take, so you can plan them out more effectively in the future."Once you understand how you're using your time – and how long certain projects take – you can set better, more realistic expectations for your clients. For example, if one client asks for a quick turnaround on a project that normally takes you a week to complete, you can show them your time sheets and offer a more realistic deadline.

2. Consider the little things.

When tracking your work time, it's important to factor in every last detail. Sure, it may take only an hour to actually write an article or create a company's logo, but all that time spent sending emails, researching, or interviewing experts in order to write or design well that take a major chunk out of your day.

"It's easily overlooked, but important," Berger says. "Consider how much time you'll need to spend per month finding, proposing, and onboarding new clients, checking email, doing research, and other 'tiny tasks' like that."

Instead of waiting until you're over-worked and over-stressed, plan out what each project will entail.

"Start by spending 30 minutes per day getting organized," she says. "Just tackle it little by little."

We know these tedious administrative tasks aren't particularly fun, but Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is your freelance career.

3. Enlist a virtual assistant.

Want to stay as organized and productive as possible? Well, there's an app for that.

"Implement a project-management system or calendar that lets you plan work out into the future to see how work from different clients overlap with each other," recommends Berger.

"This will prevent accidentally making two huge projects due the same day and other unfortunate conflicts."

Instead of spending unnecessary time vetting various systems, here are Berger's three favorite organizing programs:

- **IFTTT:** It's a free service for connecting different tools and applications to simple automations, like adding items in your to-do list based on new emails coming into your inbox. Berger says it's an incredibly time-efficient way to get organized.
- **Zapier:** Think of it as a more business-minded version of IFTTT. This program offers more advanced automations that your clients may already use. Though it's not always free, Berger says you can get a lot of bang for your buck.
- **Airtable:** No two clients are the same and they all have different requirements, which is what makes Airtable so great. According to Berger, this option is incredibly flexible, making it a great resource for creating customizable calendars, spreadsheets, and other organizational tools.

Of course, you can also get yourself a virtual admin assistant.

4. Find your limit.

How much work is too much work? Well, it depends. Nobody knows how you work better than you, so it's important to be honest with yourself.

"It's definitely a mix of what type of work you do, what your clients need, and how you'll be most effective," Berger says. "I know writers who batch client blog posts, but I'm able to deliver better service my own way."

Are you a one-project-at-a-time kind of person or do you work more efficiently when you're juggling multiple tasks? Instead of taking every opportunity that is offered to you, be honest about what your maximum bandwidth is and stick to it. Sure, nobody *wants* to say no to a task, but honoring your bandwidth will keep you from feeling burnt out.

Freelancers, how do you juggle a lot of tasks and still stay productive? Tell us in the comments below!

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