How To Create A **Profitable Career**
On **Upwork** *By Freelancing*

upwork

Saved My Life
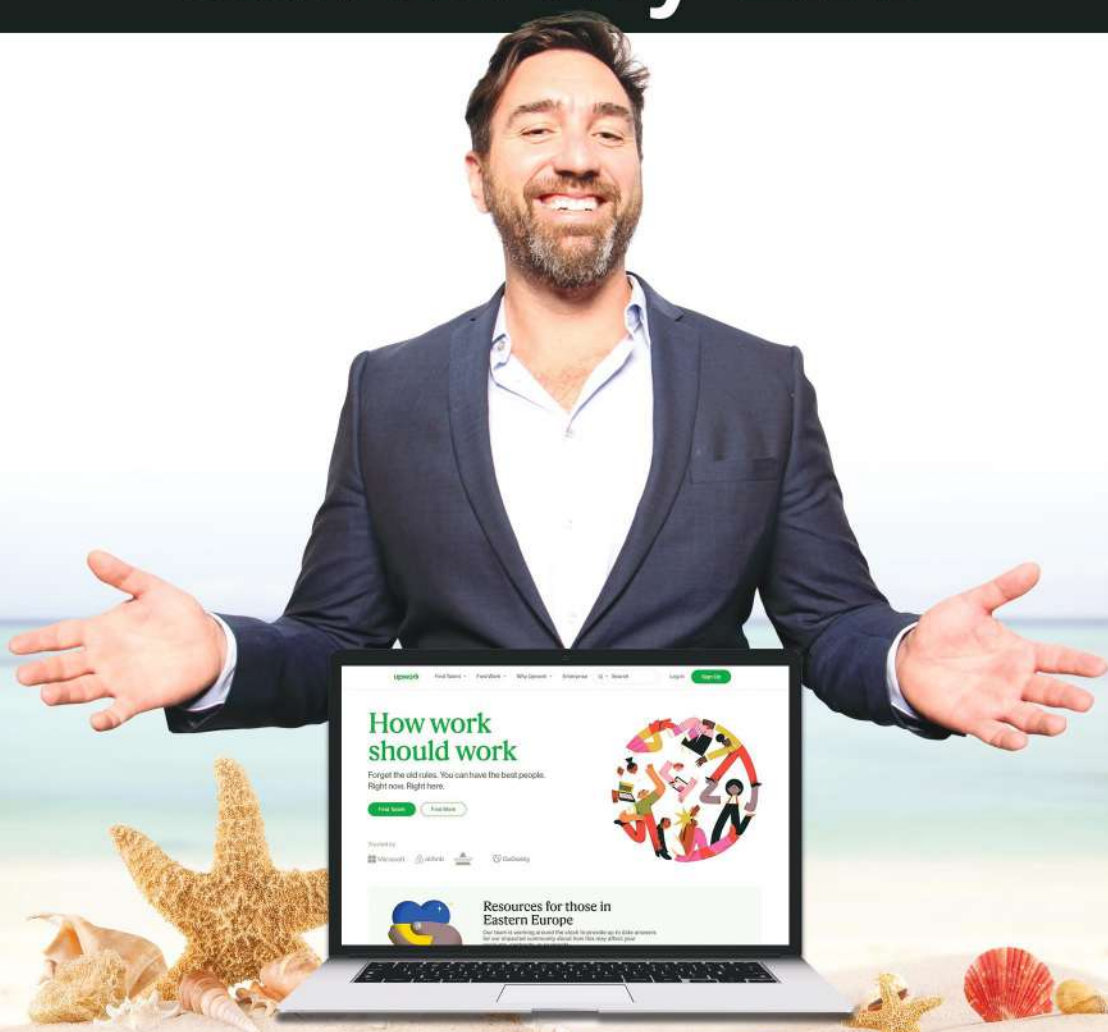
ADAM PALMER

UPWORK SAVED MY LIFE

HOW TO CREATE A PROFITABLE CAREER ON UPWORK BY FREELANCING

ADAM PALMER

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PART FOUR
COMMON UPWORK CHALLENGES
(AND HOW TO GET PAST THEM)

I dedicate this book to all of those struggling with money and employment problems. I want to offer you hope that you can achieve great financial success working as an independent freelancer on a platform like Upwork. When I was down and out, Upwork truly saved my life. I believe it can save yours too, if you take advantage of your skills, work hard, and follow a sound freelancing strategy.

———

I also dedicate this book to my son since I seriously don't think he'd be here if Upwork didn't allow me to work around the world.

INTRODUCTION

The day started like any other. Shitty. I had no idea how to pay my multiple minimum credit card payments and take care of things like rent and food. My unemployment checks were fading fast, and my finances were screwed.

Fortunately, I was able to receive unemployment because I'd just been let go from the California job that had recently rescued me from the cold East Coast. More importantly, this job was helping me crawl out of the tens of thousands of dollars of debt my two failed restaurants had caused.

Over the last few years, I had also managed to rack up an insane amount of credit card debt trying to launch an app called Food for Thought, which was meant to help restaurant owners like me collect feedback in exchange for free food.

Clever, right? Unfortunately, *clever* doesn't pay the rent!

Neither of these endeavors panned out, and it was extremely sad to say goodbye to our staff at the restaurants, who were family to me.

Once my partners and I closed up the restaurants and the tears dried, there was no reason to be anchored either to Philadelphia or to my alma mater Penn State, where the restaurants were located. I was excited to leave.

I decided to take this new job. I would be making a major shift

moving to California to work for Chad Mureta on his new online business, App Empire.

I desperately needed solid income to pull myself out of the financial turmoil my failed restaurants and app had caused, and this job seemed like the right ticket.

With the job, I had health insurance, a salary, and security!

But this soon unraveled when the co-owners split. Now I had no job, and both restaurants had come to a catastrophic closure, leaving me just under $75K in personal liability and debt. I was up to my ears in bills, and I had no idea what I was going to do.

On this horrible morning, I took an early morning East Coast phone call from my father, who told me I should declare bankruptcy to escape the disaster my businesses had caused. Would that even help?

To add insult to injury, I also received word that my understated little Hermosa Beach apartment was about to get demolished to make way for a $10K per month upgraded condo!

And, to top it all off, I needed to make an extra $1,500 to buy a plane ticket to fly across the world to visit my girlfriend in Europe or the relationship was finished.

What a nightmare my life had become. The California dream was fading fast—I needed to make a move with the few fumes I had left. Determined to find employment, I suited up and pretended to be a marketing/advertising professional. At a marketing staffing agency in Los Angeles, I presented my portfolio of projects that myopically portrayed my career and personality. The whole charade felt out of character, and I had a hunch the hiring team didn't think my talents were valuable enough for their clients.

I've always had a problem interviewing and selling myself since I never thought I'd be a good employee. But I needed to find a job! I was hungry. I was hysterical. And my days of being able to pay my bills were numbered.

As I left the luxurious building in downtown LA in the suit I may have worn once or twice to a wedding, I grabbed a taco from the street meat dude and hopped into my beat-up Pathfinder. Deep down in my stomach, I knew this type of job would not work for me, but I didn't

know what else to do. I needed a better plan before I had no income at all.

The unemployment checks were just not going to cut it!

One small ray of sunshine during my tenure of turmoil was that I wound up developing a much deeper understanding of running online businesses, doing online marketing, and even developing web pages. This was important, even though I had no idea what I would do with these skills. I had all this potential and all these ideas. Still, I had no income and no job…

It was at this moment I realized I needed to make a drastic move.

In my Pathfinder, I started thinking about Chris, the consultant we had worked with on Upwork. During both the time I worked with Chad and the years running my restaurants, I had grown familiar with hiring freelancers on what was then oDesk and eLance. We typically outsourced small paid gigs for things like data entry or graphic design.

I knew you could hire website builders on these platforms, but back then it was still best if you called up the neighborhood nerd or hired an agency if you wanted website designers who were the real deal.

However, I had always been fascinated with the idea of "outsourcing." It seemed like such a novel concept: you could free up your time to focus on important and interesting work while having all these little tasks being done for you in the background. Instead of being pinned down by the things you couldn't or didn't want to do, you could simply contract these tasks out. Outsourcing and scaling talent through these platforms is productivity beyond comprehension.

I loved how easily quick help came, but it wasn't until I was working with Chad that I had the chance to hire expert talent to help us with our marketing efforts. That's when I met Chris.

One time we needed email automation work done for a marketing campaign that was beyond my skill set. We were using "Infusionsoft," a platform that looked like Braille to me, to manage our email campaigns.

I was tasked to find someone competent—and quickly—since this issue prevented the business from running, meaning no money was being made! Opportunity costs are real for online businesses since they

make money around-the-clock, 24 hours a day. We needed help fast, and we were willing to pay! This created a unique situation and relationship I hadn't seen on the platform, because we were forking out some pretty big bucks. Instead of the normal $5-$20 per hour freelancer, we were willing to pay an expert whatever it took.

In less than an hour after posting on Upwork, I found and hired Chris the consultant, who claimed to be an expert in the seemingly complex platform we relied on for business.

Chris came into the project and knocked it out of the park in just a few hours. I was mesmerized. Not because he was able to help so quickly, but because we had paid Chris $100 per hour to help us with our email automation!

One HUNDRED dollars per hour. Like what?

My mind began to spin. Chris had a lucrative skill set, yes, but I couldn't believe he was earning this much to drag and drop things on a screen from who knows where in the world.

This type of work was way beyond a faceless stranger making $5 per hour for menial tasks without a real relationship.

When I got home after that god-awful interview in LA, I started thinking more and more about Chris. Do I really want to keep dressing in a suit and tie and pretend to be someone I'm not? Or can I be someone who manufactures and manifests his reality doing things he wants to do?

Who was to say I couldn't learn the same platforms and systems as Chris had? I probably knew things Chris didn't know that could be helpful to businesses, right? These were the questions I started repeating to myself. I could be Chris or maybe someone earning even more than Chris. The idea of working from my laptop from anywhere in the world, making a crisp Benjamin every hour I tuned in to work, was extremely alluring.

This led me down a rabbit hole to better understand Infusionsoft and other similar platforms that companies rely on to make money and stay in business. I spent time teaching myself everything I could find and applying these new talents to my existing skill set. All the information was out there online—I just had to seek it out and learn.

The takeaway for me? When I stopped and thought about how

much this guy was making to help us with our marketing needs, my mind was blown. The idea that Chris could be bringing in what a doctor or lawyer makes per hour—from his laptop!—was all I needed. I decided to put all of my past defeats behind me and begin looking forward.

After I lost my job at App Empire, I had nowhere else to turn. I took the leap and joined the ranks of online freelancers, just as I had seen Chris do. Instead of *hiring* freelancers on Upwork, I *became a freelancer myself*.

Fully committed, I turned my iPhone camera on myself and created the best profile intro video I could make, which wound up somewhere between pathetic and mediocre but somehow did the trick.

I didn't realize it then, but the decision to begin freelancing from my laptop changed my life. Becoming a freelancer online, on what had by then become Upwork, was the best thing I ever did for my confidence, my career, and my finances. After all the failures I'd faced, I finally had a shot at financial freedom. Better yet, life-work freedom.

Upwork *saved my life*.

In this book I'll show you how I was able to overcome my challenges once I made the commitment to be an "Upworker." It happened way faster than I thought it would, and I'm confident there's an opportunity for you too, if you want to work.

The professional world is moving toward remote, online work. Upworkers even helped me edit and launch this book. Where else would I look for this kind of help? You think I'm going to post a job on monster.com and spend four months interviewing? Not a chance! I'm going to post an opportunity and work with someone great within 24 hours!

Fortunately for me, I began my Upwork freelancing journey with a lot of marketable skills. However, don't think for a second you don't possess your own valuable set of skills. I see people from all sorts of industries that are absolutely crushing it on this platform, and it's because they have a system that works for them. I know firsthand how many invites top performers receive per week on this platform. If you want to work, you can find multiple opportunities to work on Upwork.

Upwork completely changed how I thought about employment, work, and how to measure the value of your time. After this epiphany, the genie was out of the bottle for me. I couldn't possibly imagine ever going back to traditional employment. This platform empowers me beyond belief. It is the most robust talent marketplace in the world, and if you want to take advantage of that, please read and reread this book until you are able to fully comprehend the concepts I'm laying out.

Since starting with Upwork, I have become one of the most successful freelancers on the system, earning more than seven figures, helping hundreds of businesses, and training thousands of people to get started and thrive on the platform. I'm hoping you will use this book as a manual to get you motivated to start on your freelance journey or, if you've already started, help you supercharge your free-lance business to the next level.

Upwork certainly saved my life. I have no doubt Upwork can change or even save your life too, if you want it to.

PART ONE
HOW DID UPWORK SAVE MY LIFE?

I know I'm not alone when it comes to having a disastrous financial past or patchy work experience. Many of us hate our jobs. And money problems are something a lot of people face at least once or twice in their life. Trust me, I know more than anyone that the struggle is real. Lots of people have tried to toss the hated 9-5 in favor of 'working for ourselves,' but often the stars in our eyes aren't bright enough to keep our financial fire burning.

Take me, for example. Let's just say working for myself at my money-strapped restaurants did not turn out to be a walk in the park. Even though I had a degree in business, I couldn't seem to profit enough from those restaurants to net myself more than, say, $12-15/hour. I had to pay my employees. I had to pay for supplies. I had to pay taxes and insurance. And let's not forget about rent! By the time the dust settled on the accountant's ledger, I was scraping bottom to earn what I needed to survive.

Even worse, when I was on salary with my job, It was crazy to see what I was left with after deductions. Sure, the salary may have sounded good on paper, but then when I factored in all of the taxes and fees, it came out to be even less than what I was making per hour at the restaurants. At least at the restaurants, if I worked more hours, I

probably got paid more. With a salary, it didn't matter. The more work I put in, the less money I actually made per hour.

Think about how insignificant a raise sometimes seems to be when you are working in a salaried position. Let's say you get a raise of $10,000. Sounds awesome, right? But when you factor in taxes and a 40-hour workweek, you're talking about less than a $5/hr raise. Not as exciting!

You can give yourself ten times this kind of raise when you're on your own, working for yourself. And that's what I found out.

I'm not the type of guy to sit and bitch. I knew I had to make a drastic move that would get me where I wanted to be: financial solvency. Not only did I want to *survive* financially—I wanted to *thrive*. And I wanted to be in charge of my own financial destiny. Over the course of three years, I went from that measly $12/hour I paid myself at the Pita Pit to consistently earning six figures a year freelancing. Not only do I work for myself, but I also own an agency that helps me expand my services by working with other contractors and freelancers.

How did I do it? I trusted my skills, and I was determined to help clients if they invested in me. I did everything I said I was going to do, and I fully committed to every gig I took. If you want to make it on this platform, you have to think in the same way.

MY STORY

By now you've heard of Upwork, the online freelancing platform where people who need help hire freelancers who can do the work. Upwork is the result of the 2015 merger between the two formerly biggest freelance sites, eLance and oDesk, and has over eighteen million registered freelancers and over five million registered clients. It's *the largest freelance marketplace in the world*, with over three million jobs posted every year, bringing freelancers more than $1 billion in revenue. Upwork basically pioneered a better way of connecting talented people with the businesses and individuals who need them, and it is growing like crazy.

It's a better way of working. Hopefully, by the end of this book, you'll feel the same.

When I first saw how much the consultant, Chris, was making per hour to help me with a simple email automation project, I absolutely couldn't believe it. If Chris could be earning $100/hour to help me with this task, then who was to say I didn't have a skill or talent people needed? Would people pay real money for my mind and mouse?

After all, I had plenty of business experience and a working understanding of how to develop web pages and conduct online marketing. Plus, I knew I was an intelligent guy who was reasonably smart enough to figure out what I don't know.

I was starving for a piece of that pie. I had debts to pay. I had expenses.

I needed to begin making some serious money. So I threw aside my excuses, dropped all expectations for how I thought I'd be earning money as an adult, and began feeling my way in the dark on the Upwork platform.

As American composer Thomas Newman has said, "There's nothing like desperation to sharpen your sense of focus."

If I was going to do this, I was going to do it right and go all in. I searched out all of the successful people on the system and tried to emulate them the best I could. Especially Chris! I just knew there was a place for me on the system, and I wanted to claim it. I leveraged all of the things I had learned in digital marketing to make sure I conveyed the right message and limited a potential client's aversion to hiring me. I grabbed my iPhone 7 and a green screen and shot my intro video. It was on!

Now I started the bidding. I stayed home that weekend and just went crazy applying for jobs on Upwork. I didn't stop until I found someone to reply.

My first Upwork job was helping a guy named Brian build out an email series on my new favorite platform, InfusionSoft, for his private equity business. It was a basic project, but I gave it my all, spending extra time creating a beautifully laid out email sequence that was over the top. I trained myself to do it well, so why not show off those newly acquired skills, right?

For all of this, Brian paid me $45.

Okay, not a whopping amount, but you know what happened next? He realized I knew a lot about email marketing and saw my capabilities. And I realized my laptop could generate cash easily. The next thing I knew, he was asking me, "Can you become hourly? I'll pay you $45/hour to help me with other marketing stuff."

Yeah, baby! That felt like a huge win for me. I was on the road to becoming the next Chris, but I knew I could take it even further.

Being on an hourly contract blew my mind. Now, every time I opened my laptop and flipped a little switch, I was making money.

Real money. My laptop quickly became my most valuable possession, since it was essentially an ATM machine… but better.

Soon, I was doing a lot of work for Brian, all online. It was more like "helping" instead of working. Not only did I help him with the email marketing, but he also had me doing all sorts of other things to help push his projects along. Wordpress help. Writing help. Graphic design help. He even needed my assistance with video editing—another skill I had to quickly get up to speed on.

I was learning on the fly—and get this—getting paid to learn new skills as I went. I was quickly adapting skill sets that allowed me to be as valuable as I could to this client. Plus, I was leveraging latent skills from my past I didn't ever think I'd be able to monetize like writing, graphic design, and editing Wordpress pages.

As I started accumulating skills and reviews, I watched in awe as I became someone of real value for clients. And as my value went up, so did my rates. After so many failures, it was nice to be needed again. Nice to generate something on my own. This was the win I needed.

After securing my first couple of great reviews, I was thrilled to see my social proof start doing some of the heavy lifting of selling myself. Projects led to projects, and I knew very early on that this was going to work. At the time, there was a shortage of freelancers on Upwork who would go above and beyond expectations and do whatever it took to complete the job. Because of this mediocre freelancer mentality, I knew I could use my diligence to quickly rise to be a top freelancer in the system. I just needed to stick with my plan, and perhaps I could be one of the biggest people on the platform. And it worked!

But don't think because I'm here there's no more work to be had. There's an abundance of work, and you can get it if you want it. There are thousands of jobs posted daily—nobody has a monopoly on these gigs. Aside from this, more and more companies are looking to post work, since standard hiring is practically dead. But we'll discuss more about that later.

Even though my first jobs were going well, sometimes I felt like I had to swallow my pride to keep going. Like many people, I subconsciously thought 'freelancing' was sort of a dirty word. You know, it kind of equated to that creepy neighbor who said he was a "freelancer"

but was really just a design guy without a job. It meant you were kinda-sorta unemployed, looking for any scrap or handout you could. *If you can, you do. If you can't, you freelance.*

Eh, I didn't want to be *that* guy, making excuses for why I wasn't making a "real" income. However, I forged on. I didn't have many choices left, so I gave Upwork everything I had.

PARADIGM SHIFT

Very early on in my Upwork journey, I had the opportunity to visit some friends in Brooklyn. While I was there, I was working on a new project for Brian. Excited that I wasn't stuck in a single work location as I had been as a restaurant owner, I decided to change up my scenery. First I strolled over to a Starbucks. Then I got tired of that and decided to take my laptop to a pier in Brooklyn.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and the scenery was amazing. Were the colors of the day somehow even more vibrant now that I wasn't stuck in a restaurant or office?

I remember watching families strolling around, kids shrieking and playing. Behind my Ray-Bans, I smiled as I watched couples holding hands and laughing. I sat there looking out at Manhattan over the top of my MacBook, feeling a sense of elation. Here I was working... and making money! And I was doing this while gazing at an epic view! I felt proud of my work. I was giddy, clicking away at my computer, knowing I was earning and learning and clearly digging my way out of my financial hole.

Then the reality check came.

This older couple walked by me. They gazed with bewildered expressions around at everyone there on the pier as though they were

wondering what everyone was doing since they certainly weren't *at work like they should be*. Their generation obviously had to show up for a job, punching in at a certain time, for 40+ years until *they* were able to stroll around in the sunshine.

Okay, okay, I thought. No big deal. Of course, these retirees lived in a different time, with a different set of expectations and an old-fashioned paradigm. I could accept that we had totally distinct work experiences. I wouldn't expect them to understand this new gig culture.

Shaking my head, I got back to focusing on the job at hand.

But then a second couple walked by, looking less bewildered and more snarky. They were probably millennials wrapped up in the 2012 tech boom era where everything was getting start-up capital. I imagined these well-dressed hipsters were probably taking a short break from their swank offices in Brooklyn to have lunch.

In any case, the girl aimed a smirk at me and said to her boyfriend, "Well, doesn't *he* look professional?"

"Yeah, right," the guy answered, projecting his voice so I would be sure to hear the sarcasm. "Professionally unemployed!"

Well, talk about bursting my bubble. Yeah, that dude's unsolicited comment definitely hurt my pride. You know what, though? I got the last laugh. A few years later, I look back on that experience and realize how wrong that idiot was. Today, I can proudly say I went from being a newbie freelancer, psyched about earning $45 per hour, drooling my way through my first series of gigs, to someone who is now earning a substantial six figures a year, doing the work I love. I've made a career of doing it all as a "professionally unemployed" freelancer.

I'm not employed by a big tech company with some posh office in Brooklyn, and I'm certainly not working a lifelong career-type job like the first couple who aimed their judgment at me that day. But you know what? Who the hell cares? I'm making good money, doing work I'm awesome at, and I own my schedule, my life, and my location. Even as I write this book, in fact, I'm working and writing from a beautiful vista in Northern Spain. (But let's not get ahead of ourselves!)

Is *this* what a career looks like these days?

My reality as a "professionally unemployed" freelancer is this: I

have the magical ability to make my income directly from my laptop. I can make pretty decent money in three easy steps:

1) Turn on computer,
2) Work for client, and
3) Make money.

An amazing epiphany!

With my newfound paradigm shift, I went from hopeless to confident in a matter of months. I went from having no idea how I was going to survive to the full knowledge that I was going to be just fine—and better than fine. My life had completely changed when I learned my livelihood was something I owned, not something given to me.

Maybe you are where I was back in my dark days, not knowing how I was going to pay my bills. I had two failed restaurants and a ton of debt. Yeah, I did have a full-time job after that, but I was working for someone else, and that job was shaky. I knew I could do better.

Do you feel hopeless, out of options, like I sometimes did in my restaurant days? Are you applying for crappy, low-paying jobs you don't want because you know they won't make ends meet or stimulate you? But you feel frantic enough to take anything, just to be earning some money, ANY money?

I have a better way for you. You don't have to get stuck in a low-wage position as a dishwasher or retail clerk. If you have any skill at all in doing things on a computer, you can find work as a freelancer which will dig you out of the hopeless hole you're currently in and help you take back your life.

When I see some of the contractors killing it on Upwork, I can't help but think about my cousin who spent most of her life managing a big box retail store. She literally broke her back making sure this place was stocked correctly and looking nice. In her ten-year stint at that job, I think she went through three surgeries, even though her physical health just continues to decline.

Now she spends her time fighting a disability case because she lives in agonizing pain. She can't even work on a computer, because then she'll lose any settlement, so she's left in this crazy place because she

was doing work she probably shouldn't have been doing in the first place.

Had she learned how to make a digital version of that store, there wouldn't have been such heavy lifting, and she'd still be in the game. Plus, she would have been compensated so much more.

Don't wait until your back is broken. This book will help you figure out how to pivot from where you are right now, whether that is unemployed or underemployed, to doing well-paid work that satiates your bank account and exercises your talents. I'll share with you the strategy I used to get myself from panicky to paid in a few years.

I'm stoked I found Upwork, which saved my life. I went from certain ruin to ruling my own realm. Because I'm so excited about Upwork's power to do the same for you, I plan to share with you the things I've learned over the years, so you can get started as soon as possible.

Finding success as a freelancer on Upwork is something that takes strategy, effort, moxie, and, above all, consistency. I'm Upwork's biggest cheerleader, because I believe there's a huge, beautiful world of work online waiting for anyone willing to work hard and learn.

Upwork saved my life, no doubt. In this book, I want to give you the tools you need to let Upwork save your life too.

WHAT UPWORK IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

Before I go any further, I have to be sure we're on the same page. To truly understand what Upwork is, you first have to understand what Upwork IS NOT.

Upwork is not an employer. They do make it easy for freelancers to find work through them, but they aren't the ones in control of your success: you are. They're also not: your agent, your caretaker, your pimp, your butler, your personal assistant, or your mommy. Don't get me wrong; Upwork has a plethora of useful features that help free-lancers get noticed and find well-paying gigs. But when it comes down to it, you're the one who has to go after those gigs voraciously or—guess what?—another freelancer will get there before you and eat your lunch.

Since Upwork is not your employer, they're not going to babysit you. Freelancers need to take each gig seriously—no one is going to hold you accountable if you screw up. The only thing that will happen, in that case, is you'll get a terrible review for bouncing from the job, and you'll be less likely to get hired again.

Now that I have so many clients, I also hire other freelancers on Upwork to help me do my gigs. Sometimes, I even hire folks at hourly rates of $50-100, which is cool for me since it brings everything full circle and reminds me of how wonderful this freelancing ecosystem is.

That's something you need ingrained into your head. This isn't like the old days where people compete directly with a job or a gig. You're actually only competing with yourself, because there's an unlimited amount of work you could be engaging in.

Even though you won't be working for a traditional employer as a freelancer on Upwork, don't worry. You'll find that there are a multitude of clients who are posting jobs at a rapid clip. Most of these clients need an ensemble of tasks completed since most are online entrepreneurs who have a million things going on. Any given job being posted is merely an iceberg of opportunities. Your goal is to get yourself out there and engage with any client who you think may respond back— and then convince them you can help them.

This is online dating meets work, but unlike dating, it's not frowned upon to make it to home-base with every amazing person you find. You're allowed to have multiple relationships that go on simultaneously. And it's okay to be dumped. In this world, it's also okay to be short, tall, big, and small. You'll be judged only by the content of your character and your ability to do great work.

There's an endless amount of work to be found, so remove any limiting beliefs that you developed while reading job posts on creepy Craigslist. If you don't believe me, just refresh the screen on the "find work" page on Upwork and see how quickly the job listings come. Then, if you want to be a detective, visit the websites of the businesses posting. You will find that they are almost always real businesses that hire real professionals to help keep their enterprises going. Even though you are not working for a traditional employer, you can easily be one of those people hired remotely by these companies through the Upwork platform.

I would say, from my own hiring experience on Upwork, at least 80 percent of freelancers on the platform aren't as serious as they should be, don't try as hard as they could, and don't take the time to learn and grow. Mediocrity is the norm. I don't tell you this to discourage you, but rather to point out the fact that you can attract attention in a big way if you diligently and responsibly complete every gig.

Upwork is also not a passive income source (at first). For every dollar you make as a freelancer on Upwork, you will have your ass

glued to your computer. This can be from anywhere in the world so long as you have power and Internet. My favorite office is the beach with my phone operating as a hotspot.

Take advantage of the situation you're in, the world you're living in, the technology you have, and how lucky you are that you can operate this way. At no point in human history have we had the opportunity to work like this. If you're not taking advantage of it, you have to be wondering why.

To be prepared, I keep an array of laptop batteries, and I also now have several spare laptops just in case one fails. I highly suggest you have some back-up plans in case your money maker dies. You'll be up shit creek without a paddle if you don't prepare for this. Plus you'll definitely lose the respect of your clients. This is an amateur move that shouldn't happen.

No, freelancing on Upwork does not provide residual income, at least not at first. Instead, it's a method of earning money that requires you to put in hours of working at a skill you're good at.

That said, once you've developed a name for yourself and clearly know what you're doing, then I can recommend arbitraging time— meaning getting others to do work for you—by starting an "agency" here on Upwork. However, if you attempt to do this too early, you risk failing. We'll talk about starting an agency a little further on in this book. Because of that, we're going to save the passive income / agency stuff for the next book, once you're better dialed into the platform.

And even when you get to this point, it's not about getting others to do work for you and pretending you did it. It's about working as a team and being transparent with the client so gigs are completed more efficiently.

For now, understand that Upwork is not a magical tool that flows money into your bank account with little effort from you. I'll admit, I had to work my butt off over these past five years. But it is all worth it since I'm living the life of my dreams, taking on work I enjoy, living in places I love, spending time with my beautiful family and friends, and calling the shots on every minute of my schedule.

I work hard, yes. Damn hard. But I also have tons of time for fun and relaxation. The restaurant business was killer… I was lucky to

keep my doors open as long as I could. When I owned the restaurants, that business owned me. In my new line of work, freelancing with a platform like Upwork, I own myself.

Even when I wasn't on-site at my restaurants working, I was still ultimately responsible for them, so I was always within a stone's throw of a catastrophe. I remember having this app on my phone that was tapped into the camera system. On my so-called 'nights off,' I would see scenes that would make me crazy, almost always requiring me to go in and help. Unfortunately, I couldn't use Upwork to outsource this type of mayhem! As a result, I had to deal with the never-ending issue of employees not showing up, resulting in lines down the street of pissed off people. Drunk college kids passed out in the bathroom regularly. Fights broke out all the time, leading to my employees and customers being arrested. One time a manager gave a homeless girl the key and safe combination to steal from our nightly cash drop. I even had to deal with one of my delivery drivers murdering someone at a nearby club. Absolute madness.

Anyway…

On Upwork, the money doesn't flow if you don't work. But it's ultimately better work than owning and managing the Pandora's box a restaurant can be. For me, freelancing was a big upgrade from the excruciating responsibility of owning a needy, failing business that sucked the life out of me.

I didn't love owning a restaurant. However, I do love freelancing.

According to Malcolm Forbes, American entrepreneur and publisher of *Forbes Magazine*, success means "really loving what you do. If you love it, you do it well, and there's no success if you don't do well with what you're working at."

At the end of the day, freelancing on Upwork lets you achieve an amazing portfolio of work, experience, and financial reward. But it doesn't get handed to you—you have to work for it.

Last, **Upwork is not a get-rich-quick scheme.** If you strategize, build your skills, learn everything you can, and stay persistent, you can succeed on Upwork. But it takes time and does not happen overnight. If anyone tells you it will, I'd seriously question the wisdom of their advice. Anything worth building takes time. As Napoleon Hill,

acclaimed inspirational self-help author of *Think and Grow Rich*, once said, "Patience, persistence, and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success."

Upwork is an amazing platform for you to build your freelance career. This company has helped millions of people find work from their living rooms, including me, who has now worked with over 120 clients to date. I've worked about 5,000 hours on Upwork's system. It's a journey, and I'm thankful for every dollar I've earned and every client I've helped.

The key to making a good living on Upwork is following a strategy, beginning with some simple tasks to get you started, and then pivoting upward from there. I'll explain more about the strategy I used for getting started in the next chapter.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION

Upwork has consistently helped freelancers find clients, people who are willing to shell out the big bucks to the freelancer who fills their needs. However, never before in the history of the company has the demand for quality freelancers been so high.

Think about where we are in our culture right now. It's the age of freelancing. And it's the age of outsourcing. For the past several years, companies have been realizing they don't want or need to take on full-time employees, with all the overhead they require, when they can outsource a lot of their necessary work to experts who can perform the tasks, get paid, and move on.

There's no reason to give a graphic designer a desk, a 401(k) plan, and a health benefits package when the company can simply hire workers on an as-needed basis. For companies, the idea of the full-time employee is beginning to be a ridiculous concept when it comes to hiring and building fast, especially when building their businesses online.

On the flip side, many people with professional skills are rethinking and reevaluating how they work and how they are paid. Citing reasons like spending more time with family, having less of a

commute, and escaping toxic work environments, many workers have realized remote work is better for them.

These combined attitudes of companies and workers reflect what is known as "The Great Resignation," which is a term coined by Anthony Klotz, a Texas A&M professor of management, who predicted a major withdrawal from the traditional workforce. For the past several years, employees all over the US have been voting with their feet and replacing their full-time income with freelance income.

The Great Resignation was already in full swing when COVID-19 hit and supercharged the mass exodus from the workplace.

We can certainly blame COVID-19 for the worst recession in US history. And yet, even with the supposed financial hardships Americans are facing, companies are griping they can't find any labor. The worldwide pandemic has brought on a lot of changes, and the way we work and think about work is one of them. Restaurant and hotel workers, concerned about their personal safety, led the charge away from the four walls of a workplace. Many others have followed. In April 2021 alone, bean counters at the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported almost FOUR MILLION people left their jobs. This number will likely only rise with forced COVID-19 vaccinations people don't want to get.

According to Andrea Hsu in her NPR article, "As the Pandemic Recedes, Millions of Workers Are Saying 'I Quit,'" COVID-19 was a wake-up call for many people. Hsu argues people are rethinking how they're valued at work, how they spend their time, and what work means for them. "People want more money, more flexibility, and more happiness," she said.

Yeah, no crap. During the lockdowns, many workers got a chance to taste the freedom that comes from working remotely from their homes (or anywhere, really).

Although I'm sure some people craved the structure and community an office environment presents, so many more realized remote work gave them the freedom they wanted.

In many cases, remote jobs allow people to work on a more flexible schedule, work in their pajama pants, or monitor their children while Zooming with someone across the world. A huge number of workers

started realizing they could find remote work that better aligned with their passions and skills—and made them fundamentally happier.

Ahhh… dare we suggest something good actually came out of a worldwide pandemic?

The Great Resignation existed before COVID-19. But according to Upwork's chief economist, Dr. Adam Ozimek, the pandemic cast aside people's traditional views of work, while the forced period of remote work shook up the way they thought. Workers now realize they have a choice. In this precarious, precious life, people started realizing they have a right to make their living in a way that works for them. Suddenly, the dream they thought was crazy became attainable.

"Using a new survey of 4,000 professionals in the US, Upwork finds many professionals are less than enthused about the return to the office and are making moves as a result," Dr. Ozimek reports. "Beyond just the expected move from one full-time role to another, there are also a substantial number of professionals who are considering making the move from full-time roles to freelancing. Already, businesses are dealing with an elevated level of resignations… Our survey indicates that this is far from over."

Some people, in choosing not to return to the office, are turning to other companies that offer remote options. However, since so many people are flipping the bird to these companies not adapting, there's a need for labor like never before. What happens when there's a shortage in the supply of workers? The demand goes up, and companies will go where the workers are and hire them.

One of those places clients go is… you guessed it... Upwork.

According to Ozimek, there's a huge growth in the freelance workforce. Upwork's survey shows ten million people are considering freelancing, which represents "a 17 percent increase in the total freelance workforce when compared to the 57 million people that freelanced in all of 2019."

Whether you work in the fields of IT and development, graphic design, finance and accounting, engineering and architecture, legal, sales and marketing, writing, or translation, you'll find business clients looking for your skills on Upwork. The best part of the deal? You can work from home, for yourself, on your own schedule, taking only

those jobs that appeal to you. Your commute will be as long as it takes you to roll out of bed and get in front of your laptop (unless you keep your laptop in your bed, in which case, you're golden). You don't have to travel anywhere unless you want to liven up your scenery or get away from your kids or snotty cat. Your working hours can be as efficient as possible, which frees up time to do more of the things you love: spend time with your family, surf, play video games, binge-watch Netflix, or travel the world.

Puffin, my dog, has been able to live her best life, knowing every day is "Bring Your Pet to Work" day! Something, again, that was impossible for me to do in the restaurant industry or office environments.

You can work for a company and make money. You can. But money is not the only source of energy in life. You can always make more money. The one thing you're not able to make more of? TIME. This is the beauty of freelancing. You get to stay in charge of your own schedule and your own hours, leaving plenty of time for the things you care about.

Freelancing on a platform like Upwork is becoming the ultimate 21st century trend and can absolutely launch you from the zone of mediocrity into the sweet zone of complete and utter independence.

THE MULTIPLE BENEFITS OF UPWORK

Okay, I'll admit it. There are a ton of freelancing platforms online today that you could use if you wanted to. There's Fiverr, Toptal, Guru, Freelancer.com, People Per Hour, Aquent, 99Designs, and Solidgigs. But Upwork is the absolute best. In the following paragraphs, I'll give you some of the reasons why, which I talk about a lot in my popular blog, UpworkSavedMyLife.com.

EASILY TRACK AND BILL TIME

First of all, Upwork gives you the ability to easily track and bill the time you work with confidence you will get paid. When I first started on this platform, it was a huge relief for me to realize that Upwork had my back. If I was going to sell my time for money, I wasn't going to get burned by a deadbeat client who decided to walk away without paying. Good luck going after a client doing this to you. You'd be as successful squeezing blood from a turnip.

Nobody wants to get stiffed by a parasitic client, but it happens. I've seen that ruin so many client/freelancer/agency relationships in the past, and I don't want any part of that. Money can make people weird. And there's nothing worse than completing a big job for someone only to realize they never had any intention of paying you.

Before I began with Upwork, I'd freelance with clients I had found on my own, creating digital media items like menus or websites. But it was always a hassle billing these clients. Especially when I billed them hourly. I could never be certain I'd get paid.

Since I began on Upwork, their automatic payment system has saved my butt a few times when clients went dark or some shenanigans came up with their credit card or PayPal account. Thank goodness Upwork steps in to make sure I get paid without me even having to invoice a client. They take care of absolutely everything and make sure you get your money.

I often hear nightmare stories about clients not paying. The only move left to traditional freelancers is small claims court, which is a giant, ineffective waste of time. On the Upwork platform, though, a freelancer doesn't have to worry about any of that.

With Upwork, the Time Tracker bills the client for you, and the client pays you through the system. This is a huge relief and gives the freelancer assurance they'll get paid. This remains an important incentive. Upwork is a special platform that gives security in an insecure world. I'm unaware of any platform that provides the level of security Upwork does.

Upwork is essentially a time marketplace where you trade your time with the client for money. Upwork makes it very simple. You are assured that every time you sit down at your laptop, turn the Time Tracker on, and work, you will be earning.

In addition, Upwork offers something called "Hourly Protection" (or "Fixed Price Protection," for those jobs not billed hourly), which is a payment protection plan to make sure you get paid. To reward loyal users of the site, to foster fairness, and to help freelancers grow their businesses with this platform, Upwork will back up any funds that are due to you, even if the client decides not to pay. In order to be eligible for the payment protection, freelancers need to follow the Terms of Service and also abide by a few other guidelines. For instance, you need to work with a client with a verified payment method, keep your account in good standing, stay under the total allowable hours agreed upon by the client, and log your hours and diary of tasks on the Upwork Desktop App.

AN EXPANDED CLIENT BASE

Working on Upwork has allowed me to find amazing clients from around the world. My first client ever was from Philadelphia, while my second one was from mainland China. At any given time, my team and I have clients in multiple time zones, meaning work is happening around the clock. There's never a shortage of work at any time of the day or night.

Coming from the world of restaurants and pseudo offices, where I was anchored and tied to a fixed location, this was mind-blowing! We could only do business during lunch and dinner with the restaurants, but on this platform, you can be working anytime you want. Sure, I'd hired people for things in the past, but it's an entirely different animal when it's *your* laptop that has turned into a real-time ATM machine. Suddenly, there I was, earning money from companies around the world without selling anything more than my time.

In my experience on Upwork, it seems companies want someone they can stay attached to on an individual level. The platform itself makes it extremely easy to keep a person-to-person connection. As both a freelancer and a client on the system, I love the ease of hooking up with people on Upwork. I work, they pay. Someone works for me, I pay them. How can it get any easier than that? It's a magical solution for getting things done.

QUALITY CLIENTS

On Upwork, you'll find quality clients who are not simply tire-kicking. They are ready for action and ready to hire. In the old days of freelancing, you'd have to spend a lot of time and money trying to get traffic or find real clients who were serious about hiring you. Upwork saves you that heinous chore of talking to clients who "just want to know how it works" or "what would you charge?" but then disappear into the abyss.

Tire-kickers can waste a whole lot of time that would better be spent on the clock, working for money. The people who go to Upwork to find workers are serious buyers. Gone are the days of emails that go

nowhere or potential clients who don't show up for the "meet and greet" Zoom call.

You won't have to beg someone to come to you. Instead, you apply for those jobs you think you can do. If the clients are interested in you, they will hire you. Simple as that.

NEVER A SHORTAGE OF CLIENTS

Upwork also presents a steady flow of freelance jobs. There is never a shortage of clients. Businesses and individuals in need of labor post jobs all day long.

Each time you log in, you'll likely see new interesting opportunities you might consider applying for. Here are some examples of what you might find, depending on your search parameters, which you define based on your own preferences and skills:

- "Virtual assistant to curate the best moments of podcasts"
- "Need someone to send out lead generation emails"
- "Looking for a sparkling logo"
- "Health article writer"
- "Data entry, answering calls & instant messages"
- "We urgently need a proofreader to work remotely"
- "Need some text changed on two images using Photoshop"

The listings update frequently since there are so many companies and individuals looking for people to help them. With over five million registered clients, freelancers have their choice of types of work they'd like to do. Even if you niche down to one simple kind of work, say answering emails, you'll consistently have an unending supply of opportunities.

Another interesting thing that happens when working with business clients on Upwork is you begin to develop relationships. If the client likes your work, they'll likely ask you back for repeat work. Freelancers with a little more Upwork experience point out that, after a while, they no longer need to write very many proposals, since clients come to them.

A steady stream of work coming to your laptop in any location you choose? Why, yes, *please*!

TONS OF SUPPORT

One last benefit I'd like to point out is that you'll be able to find tons of support to better understand Upwork. Whether it's the abundance of Upwork articles that explain how exactly everything works or the many advice-giving articles and blog posts that are found online, you'll always have an answer to your question.

ANYONE CAN WIN WITH UPWORK

The point of this book is to help jump-start your freelance career. Upwork can get you to higher ground if you need it to. That is how it happened for me, so why not for you?

If you have a passion for doing work that pays you well and yet is flexible enough to allow you to live the life of your dreams, then freelancing on a platform like this is for you.

Anyone, absolutely anyone, can find success as a freelancer in this space if you have the right attitude and follow some guidelines for getting there. I want to light up your freelancing path and give you the confidence and knowledge you need to not only survive but thrive, using this all-encompassing tool. In the next chapter, I'll explain how to get started on Upwork, outlining things to think about and tips for actually setting up your profile so you can get started looking for jobs.

Upwork truly saved my life, and I hope it will save yours too. Get ready to begin your incredible freelancing journey!

PART TWO
HOW TO GET STARTED

In 2021 and beyond, experts predict that working online is going to become a bigger and bigger trend. I want to help you maximize on this trend by teaching you not only how to fall into an occasional gig but also how to turn your freelancing into a fully operational, successful business.

For the past five years, I have earned a consistent six figures using this platform, bringing home $2,000-8,000 every week. I have been successful at this way of building my business, and I want to share the secrets I used to get you ramped up as soon as possible.

As I mentioned before, I went from making $12-15/hour working at my restaurant business to commanding anywhere between $500 to $750/hour working from anywhere in the world, while making tons of clients happy and satisfied.

When I started looking for information on how to turn a freelancing career into a business, I quickly realized there's a bunch of under-cooked information online. So much that it can be difficult to sort through the thorns and find the rose. If you follow the wrong advice, you run the risk of winding back where you started, feeling frustrated and confused.

After years of trial and error, I'm here to cut through the noise and give you a clear, non-biased view of how to get started on Upwork and begin living the life of your dreams. If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, read on to hear my steps for getting started on Upwork.

BEGIN WITH THE RIGHT MINDSET

The right attitude will get you far in this game. If you can harness your thoughts at the beginning of your freelancing journey, you'll be more likely to find success.

BE OPEN

The problem with offering just ONE type of service on Upwork is you may run the possibility of competing on price, delivery time, and other things that box you in.

Your current clients will ask more and more of you if they know you can handle a variety of tasks. They want to be able to trust that you'll figure it all out for them so they don't have to. They don't want to have to hire and manage multiple people. If you take on too much, the worst case scenario might be that you need to recruit a fellow freelancer to help if you start to stumble. If you end up inviting other freelancers to help you complete a job, just always be honest with the client about how you're handling things. Managing expectations is crucial in the web of work you are spinning on Upwork.

If you're hell-bent on sticking with one offering, it may make sense to productize your services on "Project Catalog" and run your freelancing like a machine. I'll talk about that later on in the book.

STAY POSITIVE

In any pursuit, a positive attitude will get you places. It's no different for someone who wants to start freelancing. You have to go into the work with a positive mindset. Keep looking forward and know this can and will work for you. Go in with enthusiasm for the job. Have fun and think of your freelancing journey as a game. I truly believe a positive attitude is the best thing you can take into your new role as an online worker.

CONFIDENT AND STOIC, BUT NOT ARROGANT

Be confident in yourself, but try not to come across as arrogant to potential clients because they're not going to want to deal with you. Yes, you have valuable skills you're trying to sell, but no one wants to work with a cocky freelancer who acts like they think they're God's gift to clients everywhere. No, it's better to stay humble and grateful to keep the clients coming back for more of your good character—and hopefully skilled work.

I actually try my best to undersell myself during my initial consultations since I don't want to run the risk of attracting a client that doesn't vibe with me. Be happy you're on the phone with them or messaging them but never force anything too much.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

Turn down any job you don't think will be good for you. If you feel uncertain about a job at the beginning of it, you'll likely end up hating the gig in the long run. Even a slight doubt should make you walk away before you sign on.

You likely won't know this for sure until after you've had a phone conversation with the potential client. When you talk to the client, assess whether the job jives with you based on budget, timeline, size of the project, the client's experience level on Upwork and their reviews, and the type of person you think they are. If something just doesn't feel right, trust your gut. Gracefully bow out of the project.

FINISH WHAT YOU START

Once you do find a client you click with and a job you think you'll love, take the job with the full intention of finishing what you start. So many freelancers on Upwork walk away from jobs halfway through. They just quit, cold turkey. This is bad for the clients since the job remains undone, and they are left in the lurch. However, the freelancer who whiffs gets hurt too… maybe more, actually, since they'll very likely get a crappy review, and their job success score will be lowered. So don't do it. Don't take a job unless you have every intention of finishing it.

When I first started, I quickly realized my skills were pretty common, and the competition was fierce. What differentiated me from my competition, however, was my competency. I was reliable, whereas other freelancers were not. When other freelancers bailed, I finished what I started. I made myself trustworthy, even though other freelancers couldn't seem to achieve such levels with their clients.

Upwork is one of the easiest platforms to start out on because, at the end of the day, extreme dedication is the rarest talent on the system. If you stay true to what you promise to do, you will excel in this space.

That said, this trait is becoming more prevalent. Every day I see people and profiles on the platform that are consistently crushing it. Their reviews are dynamite, and you can tell they're taking this seriously. On YouTube, there are single mothers and fathers showing how much they're earning and how they are able to manage their insane lives.

That's the beauty of it. As long as you have power and the Internet, you should be able to complete the project.

ACT LIKE AN ADULT

Another bit of wisdom: don't act like you're in sixth grade. Yeah, you heard me right. Sixth graders are over-the-top dramatic about everything. They live in their egos. They get offended at the drop of a hat,

and they spread rumors and lies about each other. They look at the world from a "me" perspective.

You can't do this as a freelancer. Leave the drama for the other freelancers, and don't let your pesky ego get in the way. This attracts the wrong energy because, instead of working with new clients and earning an income, you're focused more on settling the score and making sure you're right.

I can't tell you how many freelancers have asked me what to do about disputes. It usually boils down to figuring out how to make the client happy and move on. A positive review is worth more than whatever being right is worth. Read that again, in case you missed it: *A positive review is worth more than whatever being right is worth*.

You need to think professionally and remain calm and cool at all times. Figure out what the problem is and move on with new work. Don't dwell and get too hung up on anything. Always keep your eyes on the horizon. Remember, there is an abundance of work on Upwork. Please consider this important advice since it's imperative to your success. Karma is a very real thing on Upwork, so keep the focus on your company and move on. And this leads me to my next point…

THINK OF YOURSELF AS A COMPANY

Imagine your freelance business is a company. And you? You're the CEO *and* the employee in your own company. As an employee, how would you want the CEO to react to a situation to ensure the company stays great? As the boss, how would you feel about an employee providing a service the client wasn't happy with? This exercise forces you to look more objectively at any given situation versus letting your emotions get the better of you.

I look at my hourly rate as though it is my stock price. As I accumulate growth, knowledge, reviews, and experience—and yet have less and less time—my stock price goes up.

I try to award myself with a stock bump after I complete every project!

You should gamify this freelance experience and make it fun for yourself. Just think about all of the hoops you had to jump through in

your last job to get yourself a raise. You deserve it. We are entering a new realm of worker empowerment.

You're also able to raise and lower your rates and stock price as you wish, but just as in the stock market, if you go too high, nobody will buy. But if you stay low, you won't seem confident about the true worth of your talents. If that happens, you'll most likely start competing on price, slowly becoming more and more bitter, until your company gets delisted.

Don't do that. Be a freelancer who is high in demand and shining. Make sure you're moving forward and growing.

UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT

Clients aren't always experts on this platform, and they may not know what they need. They also may not be organized. The true bad asses on the platform, meaning the freelancers who take freelancing to the next level, learn to help the client understand what they want even when they may have no idea.

Clients ultimately need a product, or asset, that you make. In order for that product or asset to be most valuable, it needs to have been curated by mind and physical labor. In a content writing example, someone would need to think about what to write and then write it. Somebody else would need to publish. Another freelancer would then need to design the page it's shown on and optimize that content. Beyond that, and depending on the job, the client might need other tasks completed. My point is that you can really take any job and start cross-layering skills to help the client in the most effective way possible.

Clients may not know how to do 100% of the things I mentioned. And, if you can do any given task better than they can, they'll want to save their time and energy by offloading it onto you. It will be up to you if you choose to help them, of course. But, be aware, if you don't step up, there's a chance the project may not move as quickly as it should since you'll be waiting for other people to help out.

As you complete projects and gain wisdom, you can help your clients figure out what content or product you're building has worked

in the past from your experience. This saves clients an immense amount of time. Never lose sight of how much your client's time is worth. This is a major component to justifying charging higher rates than those freelancers who only do one thing over and over, like a robot.

HOW THE PROCESS WORKS

At the end of the day, Upwork is the world's biggest marketplace to connect talent with clients. The concept is simple. Businesses or individuals post the jobs they need help with, and freelancers sift through these listings and bid on the jobs they want to do.

In the sections that follow, I'm going to go over some of the basics of how the process works. When you first sign up on Upwork, I want you to be able to have a clear understanding of the way it works so you can jump in with both feet and get started earning right away.

FIXED-PRICE VS. HOURLY

As a freelancer, you will be offered one of two types of contracts: fixed-price or hourly. For the fixed-price jobs, the business owner lists the amount they're willing to pay, no matter how many hours it might take you. With hourly, you use Upwork's "Time Tracker" to keep track of the time you spent on the task, and you get paid accordingly. Personally, I think the hourly contract is the better option and is just about the best thing since sliced bread because every minute of your precious time is protected.

I haven't taken on very many fixed-price contracts since I find it's

easy to get caught doing too much work while not making any more money. Even so, many people fall victim to the fixed-price devil, not realizing until they're too deeply immersed in the job that the scope of work will creep higher and higher—while they still get paid the same.

Clients who offer you fixed-price contracts can potentially turn into "scope creeps." If you stick with clients like this, they'll eventually take you out. You'll find you're working too hard for not enough money, and you'll burn out. Not worth it!

However, as a newcomer to the site, you could consider taking just a couple of fixed-price contracts. Okay, I know I'm arguing hourly is the better option—and it clearly is—but it's not a bad idea to just *start* with a couple of easy wins. This will give you a confidence boost and hopefully a couple positive reviews. And those first reviews are gold. They'll help provide social proof and let Upwork know you mean business.

After that, however, I would recommend staying away from the fixed-price contracts as much as possible. Before you know it, what you thought was a simple redesign of a website turns into copywriting, proofreading, and picking up the client's laundry to boot. Okay, not really—you can't pick up someone's laundry if you're working online. But you smell what I'm stepping in. Scope creep is real. And you don't want it to happen to you, so after you've gotten started, stick with only the hourly jobs.

Just because a job is posted by a client as a fixed-price job doesn't mean the contract you take needs to stay that way. You should bid on the fixed-price job with the exact amount the client proposes, so you have the highest chance of getting on their radar. In the proposal, you can let them know the budget amount you proposed is simply a holding amount until you can gather more information and put a better estimate together. The goal of getting them on a phone call is still the same as if you were applying for an hourly project. The only difference is you'll need to convince them to change the contract type. Let them know this is how you work—and offer them the idea that they can simply budget your time to fit within the budget they need. Since they can see this is the way you work by looking at your profile, they

shouldn't have too much of an issue. Now that they like you, they'll just want to get the project done.

This little tip will flip the dynamic that has cursed so many freelancers and turned them away from independence….

With hourly contracts, scope creep is actually welcomed because it means more money and, more importantly, new skills!

On another, more philosophical note, I believe people who work on an hourly basis have a different mentality. You think of your time differently, as in "my time is scarce and thus very valuable." Also, you perceive yourself as a partner to your client instead of some kind of 'bang it out,' low-wage worker. Working hourly makes you feel like a real professional who has valuable skills worth paying for. This is a completely different arrangement and one you should aspire to.

TIME TRACKER

It's all about time. Remember, at the end of the day, Upwork is a *time* marketplace. You're saving time for the client by doing the work they can't (or don't want to) carve into their schedule. And you're using your own time to earn money. The key takeaway here: YOUR TIME is one of your most valuable assets.

As I explained a bit earlier in the book, the Time Tracker is Upwork's way to ensure you are paid for every hour you spend on the job. It really is amazing. You simply install the Upwork Desktop App onto your computer. Each time you sit down to work on a particular project, you click the toggle button to "on." You get rolling, and the minutes start ticking. When you click "off," you're done with that work session.

You can work any time you want, for any amount of time. And you don't have to send a separate invoice to the client, which frees up your time to do paid work. Whenever you want, you can look back and see all the hours you worked, added up for you in Upwork's reports and summaries.

As I write this, I have a tear in my eye. It really is a beautiful thing.

How many hours are you allowed to track on the Hourly Tracker? Well, this just depends on the contract you agreed upon with the client.

Some clients will cap the number of hours you can work each week to limit your hours to what they're willing to pay. This all depends on the job, the client, and your agreement together.

With the Time Tracker and the platform's Hourly Protection program, Upwork is all about protecting the freelancer from deadbeat clients. However, you must understand the Time Tracker is also Upwork's way to protect the client from deadbeat freelancers. When you use the Time Tracker, you are required to keep a Work Diary of the tasks you complete during that session. This is how both Upwork and your client keep track of the work you're doing. It's essentially a billing tool, not a way to communicate with the client or collaborate on the project.

While you're working on the Time Tracker, Upwork will take screenshots of your computer screen every ten minutes. It will also track the total number of mouse clicks, scroll actions, and keystrokes per segment. Okay, I will admit it might feel creepy to have someone looking over your shoulder while you work. However, I believe it is well worth it since it's the most efficient way to protect both the freelancer and the client and make sure the job is getting done in an honest, transparent way.

You can turn off the screenshots and/or bill with what is called "manual time" (work done that the Time Tracker might have a hard time tracking, such as phone calls, paper-based sketching, non-electronic research, large transfer files, or graphics rendering, according to Upwork). However, in these cases, Upwork won't guarantee payment protection.

HOW YOU GET PAID + UPWORK'S FEES

I've rambled on and on about how awesome Upwork is for freelancing. I've tried to inspire you to get on this platform immediately and start working. But no one works for free. We aren't talking about volunteering here. The question burning in all of our minds: *How do I get paid?*

Each time you work, the time gets logged into Upwork's system and you get paid accordingly, depending on your preferences (quar-

terly, monthly, twice per month, or weekly). You'll simply go to your settings (found on the dropdown under your photo on the right side of the main page). Once you are on the settings page, you'll see the tab "Get Paid" on the left-hand side, where you can decide on your payment schedule.

GET PAID. Aren't those the two most beautiful words in the universe?

Under that tab, you'll also have the option of where you want your money to go:

- PayPal ($1 Upwork withdrawal fee)
- Wire transfer ($30 per wire to any bank)
- Direct deposit to a US bank account (which takes 3-5 business days to land but is free)
- Instant Pay to your bank account (which shows up immediately in your bank account but costs you a $2 fee per transaction)

Now, obviously, Upwork needs to take a cut of your pay, or else they wouldn't be able to stay in business. *Ah, here's the rub*, you might be thinking. *If Upwork is taking part of the money I'm earning, is it really that great of a platform?*

Well, in a word: YES.

Upwork needs to stay alive as a company. Their role on this earth is to make money by providing a valuable service to both freelancers and clients. They also are not volunteering here. So they need to get a piece of the pie to keep the magic happening.

I believe the percentage they take of your earnings is well worth it, since you gain so many benefits, like the Hourly Protection. And, let's face it: you may not have found these clients on your own. If Upwork had not put them under your nose, you would likely have struggled to find this many clients this easily.

But how much does Upwork take from your pay? Well, the fees are based on a sliding scale. Generally, they will take 20 percent of the first $500 you bill a new client. They will then take only ten percent of your earnings between $500.01 and $10,000 from any one client. After the

$10,000 mark with any one client, they will take only five percent of your earnings.

Let's say you're a proofreader who wants to bill at $25/hour. If you do this, Upwork will take $5 for every hour you work, until you have earned $500 for that particular client, then they will take $2.50 for every hour you work. If your work with this client is long-term and you make over $10,000, Upwork will only take $1.25 for every hour you work.

I don't mind paying Upwork's percentage. Upwork is an elegant solution for both freelancers and clients to work together in the most efficient way possible. I embrace the fees!

At the same time, I also think smart about how I charge. What do I mean by that? Well, if I want to net $25/hour from a client, then I bake Upwork's fee into my hourly rate and charge the client $31.25/hour. Out of that, Upwork will take their 20 percent cut of $6.25. And, lo and behold, I still make my $25! Shazam!

And, you know what? The client WILL pay it. They are still getting a great deal since they don't have to pay an in-house employee a full-time salary, bonuses, health/dental/life insurance, paid time off, retirement account matching, payroll taxes, worker's compensation, or other perks. If a freelancer inches the hourly rate up a tad, that client is still saving a bundle on what they would have had to pay an in-house worker.

I would call that a win-win!

Also, the goal should be to get big projects. Not only does Upwork love to see people working on big projects, but you should love this too since the percentage drops in half after you hit $500, as I mentioned.

Very few hourly projects come in below the $500 mark, so don't think the 20 percent will be something you deal with often.

Most of my bigger projects only cost me a five percent fee—almost the cost of credit card processing! Well-nurtured relationships are rewarded very well.

THE JOB POSTS

Let's get into the fun part about freelancing on Upwork—actually sifting through the jobs and finding one you want to apply for. Before we get into how to look for jobs, let's first examine what a job post looks like.

Each job post has a variety of tidbits that will help you decide whether you want to apply to that job or not. Under the title of the job post, the main thrust is the description of the work the client needs. Some listings are pretty detailed; others are quite vague. Above the description, there will be a title of what kind of work it is, such as "Creative Writing" or "Graphic Design" or "Customer Service."

An important detail to pay attention to is when the job was listed. If it was listed three weeks ago, chances are it's not very live, and it might not be worth applying for. However, if it was posted three MINUTES ago, you'll be applying at the very beginning of the client's search for talent.

Think about it: there's a human sitting at a computer somewhere. She has just posted a job, asking for help. As soon as she clicks "post," a barrage of responses begins flooding her inbox. If you're one of the first applicants, you're much more likely to get her prime attention—especially if your proposal is top-notch. (We'll get to proposal-writing a bit later.)

Under the main description, you'll see some stats about the job, including:

- How many hours a week the job requires ("Less than 30 hours a week" or "More than 30 hours a week")
- How long the job is expected to last ("Less than 1 month," "1-3 months," "3-6 months," or "More than 6 months")
- What level of skill the client is looking for ("Entry level," "Intermediate," or "Expert")
- Whether the job is hourly or fixed-price and what the pay would be

Beneath those stats are the skills the client is looking for. These are

important to pay attention to because they should mirror the skills you have added to your profile. Again, we'll be talking about how to set up your profile in a bit more detail in the next section, but for now, please understand your client is looking for skills and you are advertising you have skills. I'll help you understand how to get noticed by clients looking for the skills you have to share.

At the bottom of the job post, you'll see a category called "Activity on this job." This section details how many people have applied so far with proposals. You'll see something like "Less than 5," which is great since it's less competition for you. Or you might see "5-10," "10-15," "15-20," "20-25," or even "20-50." You can apply to any of these jobs, but the number of applicants will help you determine whether it's worth your time.

Also included here is a note about when the client last viewed the job, which is an indicator of how seriously this client is pursuing a freelancer. In addition, we're told how many freelancers the client is interviewing at the moment, how many invites he sent out, and how many of those are as yet unanswered. All of these statistics help reveal the client's behavioral patterns and urgency for hiring.

In the right column, you'll find a little more information about the client. For instance, you'll see whether their payment method was verified or not. You'll also see what time zone they're in, along with how many jobs they have posted, how long they've been on the system, how much they've spent since becoming a member, how many people they've hired, how many active hires they currently have, and what the average hourly rate is they've paid their freelancers. At the end of the job post, you can also learn more about the client, including the titles of the jobs they have in progress and their reviews to and from freelancers.

All of this is valuable information you can use to understand how serious the client is. Although it's not written in stone, we can kind of assume the more money a client has spent on Upwork, the more likely they are to hire, pay well, and offer ongoing work—all things you should be looking for in clients you work with.

HOW DOES THE "CONNECTS" SYSTEM WORK?

On the right-hand side of the job listing, you'll see you are required to pay a certain amount of connects to apply.

The connects system is Upwork's internal currency and acts as a way to weed out the non-serious applicants. You probably won't waste connects on a job you don't really want. This is Upwork's way of maximizing a client's experience on Upwork by minimizing the multitude of tire-kicking freelancers who aren't really serious about taking a job.

We need to remember Upwork is not only working for freelancers; they are also working very hard to keep the clients happy too. Hence the win-win we talked about before.

On the job post, you'll see both how many connects are required for the job and how many connects you have left. Upwork rewards a freelancer with 40 free connects when you first register. They also give you more each month so you can keep applying for jobs. For each interview you land, you'll receive a bonus of ten more connects. And you'll get some free connects if you complete a skill certification or earn a talent badge.

You can also buy connects, a change Upwork made a few years ago that irritated some freelancers but didn't bother me in the slightest. There's been a growing trend of irrelevant freelancers over-applying for jobs. This waters down the whole platform. Upwork should be a place where excellence reigns—excellent freelancers working for excellent clients. If you have a bunch of non-serious workers and clients on each end, the whole thing becomes flimsy and untrustworthy for everyone.

Upwork also recently announced a new connects program where freelancers can use more of their connects to boost their application to any given job. Now in the beta phase, this program is intended to help a client understand which of the proposals are the most serious. Those freelancers who boosted their proposal will have a lightning bolt next to their name, with their proposal being in one of three pinned spots at the top of all the proposals the client gets. Also, adjacent to the freelancer's name will be two electrifying words: HIGHLY INTERESTED. Wowser!

Is it worth boosting your proposal with more connects? Yes! If you've taken the necessary steps to create a good funnel, you should push as much traffic as you can.

Just a quick note… the connects features tend to change very rapidly so don't be alarmed if it's all different tomorrow. They're also now including features that allow you to use connects to push your profile to the top of searches. My thought is this: take advantage of whatever they're offering. Once your profile is dialed in, it's paramount to get more client eyes on it, so do whatever it takes to make sure this happens. Landing a job on Upwork can pay a thousandfold, making the small cost of connects well worth it.

WHAT KIND OF WORK SHOULD YOU DO?

O n Upwork, such a vast variety of jobs exists it's unlikely one person has the talents or time to do them all. Nor would you want to. While it's true you could take on a variety of jobs, you probably want to focus your attention on those you can do the most efficiently, at least at first. As time passes, you can certainly branch out into learning other skills and trying for different kinds of work.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, be open-minded about expanding what you're offering to clients in the jobs you take. This will allow you to stack more skills onto your growing skillset. I'm not advocating for taking on a gig that requires skills you don't have, but rather that you start with something you know how to do and offer more things to that client that you can learn about as you go.

CONSIDER YOUR TALENTS AND PASSIONS

What have you always loved to do in your life? Loving something doesn't necessarily mean you're already great at it. But if you enjoy something, you'll probably put forth an effort to learn everything you can and practice that skill until you *are* great at it. In my opinion, life is not worth living unless you are doing things you love.

And isn't that the beauty of freelancing? You, and only you, get to decide what lights your fire. This is not a matter of Boss Man or Boss Lady making you turn in reports you don't want to write or go to meetings that bore the living hell out of you. You are the captain of this ship now. So think about what you love to do—and do the crap out of it!

What do people compliment you about? What kinds of activities do you lose yourself in? Leveraging your natural talents and passions with hard work and good marketing should land you profitable gigs.

Also, think about your education and background. Do you already have a base of knowledge on a certain topic? If you have a bachelor's degree in English, for instance, can you translate that knowledge into writing, editing, or proofreading? That Spanish language degree might best be used to offer translation services, something that is much in demand in the world today. If you have a technical background and are super pumped about learning software, you can really rake in the big bucks since these gigs are plentiful on this platform.

Consider things you can do quickly and easily. On the Upwork site, time is money. Your time is your most precious asset, and you should make sure to use it as efficiently as possible. The faster you can do a task, the more quickly you can move on to the next one, and the more money you'll be able to earn. Also, you will wow the clients with your speed and land some great reviews.

A note about talent: usually people are born with a few natural gifts. However, most of us have to work damn hard to uncover what these gifts are—and cultivate them. Don't get overwhelmed by the thought that you have nothing to offer people. You absolutely do. With the incredible range of work clients are looking for on Upwork, you'll be able to find something to get started. And even if it's not the most perfect job at first, don't worry. Just keep your feet moving and soon you'll be doing work you love, earning great money, and happier than a giant panda in a bamboo grove.

WHAT TO APPLY FOR FIRST

Once you have come up with a list of possible job ideas, things you could do easily, start throwing your hat in the ring for some gigs.

The listings on Upwork are all drastically different. You'll find a range of requests from people, asking for help with a huge variety of projects. The projects range in size and scope as well. I've had gigs that were $40, and I've had six-figure gigs. You never know how each one will work out, but the idea is to work with enough clients at the same time so if one goes down, you still have some predictability with your income.

Sometimes, a job will seem small at first, but then the client turns out to be a marketing agency that has tons of ongoing work, and you end up freelancing for them for five years. You just never know, so don't be afraid to apply.

Okay, so it's obvious: every newbie freelancer dreams of those six-figure gigs or jobs with friendly clients that last indefinitely. Yes, these scenarios are possible. And who doesn't want ongoing work available to you every time you open your laptop? But should you set your sights on them in the beginning? No, you shouldn't.

First, start small. It's a great idea to look for simple, easy jobs you can bang out very quickly, gaining traction and positive reviews. Even start with fixed-price jobs at first.

You don't want to mess up on any of your first jobs. You cannot have any bad reviews at the beginning, or it will be doubly hard to land the next gig. Taking on small milestone projects ensures 1) you won't fail, and 2) you'll get a positive review.

I wound up getting a crappy review early on, and I had to answer for it on nearly every call until it got flushed out. Don't be too discouraged if this happens, but do your best to avoid getting them in the first place.

When you first get started, please don't try to land a huge project. This will pin you down and prevent you from learning new skills. Instead, try to take on projects where you're asked only to deliver small tasks. If the client likes you and your work, they might even ask

you to do more jobs and switch you to hourly. Maybe the early tasks you take on aren't even quite at your level. That's okay.

You're going to need to swallow your pride at first. You may think you're awesome—and, of course, we both know you are—but you're going to have a tough time convincing a potential client on Upwork of that until your numbers reflect it. Objective reviews are a double-edged sword—they can help or hinder.

With each successive job—however small—you'll get a review, which helps push your profile to the top when clients are searching for talent. It also brings another feather in your cap as far as a new contract completed. This does wonders for your job success score, which measures the clients' satisfaction with a freelancer and makes you stand out as a true professional in a crowded marketplace—and someone clients are tripping over each other to hire.

Think about how powerful that kind of endorsement is coming from an open and objective marketplace.

Eventually, however, you should consider applying for jobs outside your comfort zone by 10-20 percent. There's no reason to be super-niche when applying for work because your main concentration should be improving your skill set while working on your jobs. A skilled writer for content will be a skilled writer for sales copywriting or advertising if they learn a little bit of marketing. Learn new skills along the way. This will only enrich your profile, help you gain experience, and land you more and higher-paid work.

If you haven't yet noticed the theme, I'm all about sharpening your talents and "upskilling."

SETTING YOUR HOURLY RATE AS A NEW FREELANCER

As far as setting your hourly rate, try to align it with past projects so you can justify the pay you're asking for. Be competitive in the range of rates similar profiles are asking, but don't compete on price. You can start low as long as your rate keeps moving on an upward trajectory. You never want to charge too much to start and then make a deal with someone, agreeing to work for a lower rate. This makes it look like you

are willing to haggle, as well as someone who doesn't believe in their abilities.

You should NEVER be negotiating your rate at all! You want to feel good about the money you're making per hour, because that's going to encourage you to work without thinking about other opportunities.

Increase your rate every time you complete a job and get a review. Early on you may even want to consider doubling it. You must motivate yourself to upskill. Potential clients will see you are a rising star whose time is in demand. Think of the rate increases as a way to quantify your knowledge. This tactic of leveling up every time you complete a gig pads the stats and makes it look like you're a mover and a shaker. I'll talk more about this strategy in Chapter Three.

Go way out of your way to excel at every one of these early projects, and completely blow away the clients' expectations. This is truly the way to stellar reviews, hourly rate increases, an increasing job success score, better work, and more intrinsic rewards. Keep working hard, learn everything you can, and reach higher and higher every time you complete a gig. You'll get there. You just have to believe in yourself.

But what does the client think about my rate? Will they think it is too high? In reality, I don't think the typical client really gives a crap about what they pay the freelancer as long as the project is done well. Successful projects are all clients care about, and they're willing to pay a premium. Remember, your rate can sometimes reflect the client's hourly rate when you consider how much time you're going to save them by not having to find someone else. For the client, the most expensive freelancer is one who is inefficient and makes the project go backward. The client now has the cost of the bad work, the lost time it took to prepare the first freelancer (who turned out to be a failure), the cost to now train someone new, plus the cost of the new freelancer (who may not even be good).

Remember, my first Upwork job was only a $45 fixed-price contract. The client, Brian, liked my work. This led to a $20,000+ contract and a relationship for life. (Brian literally just contacted me a few weeks ago looking for help!)

While my first hourly rate was not too high, I kept gradually

increasing it as time went on and my experience and confidence grew. And now I'm getting sometimes more than $500/hour and have a full plate of work any time I want it. Since Brian liked my work so much, he gave me several sensational reviews that likely brought in $50,000+ in new contracts, because of the social proof of the reviews.

I don't tell you any of this to brag. I want to show you how easy it can be to leverage your work into… more work!

Even if you start on this platform in a small and humble way, you'll be able to win big if you keep working hard, thinking strategically, and building new skills. Consistency wins the race here!

HOW TO SEARCH THE LISTINGS

When you are searching for a job, you can simply scroll through thousands of posts. Maybe something fun will catch your eye. However, a smarter, more targeted search makes a ton more sense.

Go to the "Find Work" tab in the top menu bar. Begin personalizing your search by typing in a keyword or phrase in the "Search for Jobs" box at the top of the screen. On the left-hand side, you'll see a bunch of search parameters that will help you narrow down your hunt for a potentially lucrative gig.

In that column, you'll be able to select the kind of job you're looking for, based on those things we just talked about from the job posts: whether it's entry level or expert, how much you're willing to work for, the number of proposals already submitted, whether the client's payment method has been verified, etc.

The more you narrow down the search, the better suited you will be to the jobs that appear. Play around with the search bar. Use different keywords that describe your expertise. Search out different software platforms you're familiar with. This has helped me get in front of the right people since different industries use different software platforms. You can save each individual search so you can be perusing graphic design jobs one day and data entry jobs the next… depending on your mood.

Keep plugging away at your search, even if it seems like you're getting nowhere at first. Try different approaches with what kinds of

gigs you apply for, change up how you write your proposals, and tweak your profile. Eventually, you'll land a gig.

There is a veritable ocean of clients searching for freelancers, so this is absolutely the best platform to find quality clients who are willing to pay your price.

The great thing about Upwork is you can use a proactive approach to get gigs. I remember when I first got on the system after dialing in my profile, I spent the entire weekend searching and applying for gigs. I quickly set up searches for gigs that would be relevant to my experience and applied for anything that seemed even remotely interesting. This turned out to be more job postings than I thought. In fact, I remember being so surprised by how many businesses needed the things I knew.

My brother was there when I was doing my search. He made fun of me, asking, "Who would possibly be looking for someone on a Saturday?"

But, hey, that's when I met my first client, Brian, who paved the way for the success I had moving forward. It didn't matter that it was a Saturday. Work schedules have metamorphosed from the 9 to 5 to working anytime the mood strikes you. So there I was, on a weekend, searching for freelance gigs. And there was Brian in that same space, looking for a freelancer.

Looking back on that story, I laugh when I think of how skeptical my brother was. I persevered in searching the listings and applying for new jobs, and look at where I am today!

PAYMENT VERIFIED?

A new freelancer might wonder, when searching the listings, how important is it that a client's payment method is verified? Should you even try for jobs where the client doesn't seem to have much experience on the platform?

Don't worry about this. Many of the clients on Upwork are not professional Upwork hirers. Chances are, they are just getting started like you are, and that's why it's important to lead them through the contract and the project. Let Upwork do its job of making sure the

billing methods are secure. In fact, the company won't even let the client start an hourly contract until the billing is figured out.

I'll say it again. The fact Upwork takes care of the billing stuff is one of the greatest perks of this platform. You don't need to be a collection agency. You pay Upwork their fees in exchange for them handling the nuts and bolts of payment. Working on an hourly basis is best since it takes away the risk of possible credit card issues in the future.

ACT FAST... BUT NOT TOO FAST

When you see a job that appeals to you on Upwork, don't sleep on it. It's important to jump on jobs quickly. To a certain extent, clients want the satisfaction of hiring someone without delay—that's part of the reason they're searching for their freelancer on a platform like Upwork, where they know hundreds of people are sifting through job ads at any given moment. It's always 9 a.m. somewhere in the world, and there's an entrepreneur that needs your help. They too are dealing with the weight of the world and are trying to relinquish themselves from the corporate world.

Making someone's dreams into a reality is by far the biggest payoff on Upwork, and I'm proud to help my clients achieve this success.

It's my belief Upwork has directly fed more families around the world than any other company. Bold, I know, but prove me wrong. We're talking about millions of people getting paid. The scale of work is magnificent and has never been achieved before, so it must be respected. The stories I hear daily about the worth of once "worthless" individuals are extraordinary. And, yes, I say "worthless" because their society had no use for their talents before Upwork came along and harnessed the power to negotiate their now valuable skills in an arena with the right buyers.

Clients are looking for freelancers who will efficiently and compe-tently get the job done **with the least amount of instruction.** They're not necessarily going to jump on the first freelancer who comes through the gate. They're looking for someone who represents the least risk and highest chance of accomplishing their goals. In some cases,

speed kills. If you're not saying the right thing and thinking strategically, it's not worth applying too quickly.

Therefore, when I say "act fast," I don't mean for you to chuck out a shoddy proposal just to get to the front of the line. If it means you're about to look like an idiot, it's not so important to jump on a job within five minutes OR ELSE. In any case, the list of proposals is not shown to clients chronologically, in the order they were received on the system, but rather listed out by relevance, based on Upwork's algorithms.

You definitely don't want to delay too long. But it's decidedly more important to present yourself as an earnest professional rather than respond so fast you make a ton of mistakes in your cover letter. Try to think of it from the client's perspective. Would *you* want to hire a freelancer who seems frenzied and careless? Or would you rather hire someone who thoughtfully applies to your job and seems capable of doing great work?

HOW TO SET UP YOUR PROFILE TO WIN

T he very first thing you'll be asked to do on Upwork is to set up your profile. This is a lot more important than you think since your profile will be something the clients see when they consider hiring you. The wording and overall tone of your profile require a little finesse if you want it to resonate with clients.

Potential clients may see your profile in up to four ways. First off, they will see you, most commonly, in the search results after they've searched for a certain type of worker. For instance, in the search bar at the top of the main Upwork page, they might type in "Transcription." Upwork's algorithm will do its work and present a full list of possible transcriptionists in the search results.

The second way clients might stumble upon your profile is in the "Suggested Freelancers" page that pops up when they first submit their job posting. The freelancers that appear here will be even more carefully cultivated from Upwork's algorithm since the system will have a little more information about what the client is actually looking for.

Profiles will also appear on the client's "Proposal Review" page, which accumulates all the proposals, complete with cover letters, proposed terms, attachments, any answered questions, and the free-lancer's profile link.

Last, clients will see your profile in a confirmation email they receive directly after they submit their job posting. The email confirms the posting is live, but it also suggests possible freelancers who could do the work. Remember, Upwork's job is to match up clients who have needs with freelancers who have skills. Because of this, they do everything in their power to find the best people for their clients as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Just to give you an idea of where I began, some of the skills I marketed in my own initial profile were:

- Website design using WordPress and themes like Divi
- Sales Funnel Development using platforms like Infusionsoft and Get Response
- Copywriting geared toward storytelling
- Graphic design using Photoshop
- Email automation

I don't know about you, but the idea that my profile is floating out there in the Upwork biosphere makes me want it to be as polished as it can be!

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF YOUR PROFILE

The best way to get your profile up and running successfully is to go through each category and make it shine. Upwork walks you through the process in a user-friendly way. There's no limit to how much or what you can say in your profile. This is your time to describe yourself, your skills, and what you can offer to clients. Don't cut yourself short.

First, you'll be prompted to enter a **Title** for the work you do.

Upwork suggests, "Enter a single sentence description of your professional skills/experience (e.g., Expert Web Designer with Ajax Experience)." Mine says "Digital Marketing Automation Expert."

Next to that, there is a spot to add your **Hourly Rate**—the most important thing, right? We talked about setting your beginning hourly rate above. I'll say it again… start small and humble, while making sure it's a rate you're excited to be working for. I was stoked to make

$45/hr. I also had reasons for justifying this rate. Start at a rate that will allow you to gain traction with the system, establishing yourself as a capable freelancer. Remember, always and only go up!

The next section, the **Overview**, is the main thrust of your profile. This is where you show clients you are the person they're looking for. Describe your strengths, skills, projects, accomplishments, and education. Make sure it's concise and as perfect as it can be.

This section is where you should add a ton of proof. Who have you worked with? What are your specific skills? What software do you know, and which are you fluent in? How do the software platforms you know work in conjunction with each other? What can you offer clients and promise them? What other specialties do you have? What can you bring to the table? Everything you mention in the Overview section of your profile should be packed with words and skills the clients will be searching for.

In your Title and Overview, be sure to include:

- A results-driven headline,
- A friendly introduction,
- A listing of your experience, and
- How you can add value to your client.

Essentially, you want to show these potential clients you're the full package. Differentiate yourself from the competition, if you can, explaining why the client should hire YOU over the next freelancer. Talk about your skills and wonderful personality traits, yes. But, most importantly, **nail down how you can help the client solve their problem.**

Let people know you're unique, you're willing to help them, and you know what you're doing.

The tone of your Overview should be authentic and honest. You don't want to look like a bot or some anonymous worker who really doesn't care about the client or their needs. Let your personality shine —come off as a real, live human being who truly wants to be of assistance.

Also, it's important to target the right audience in your Overview.

Don't try to hit all the marks, listing out everything you've ever done: graphic design, Uber driving, dog walking, shoe salesperson, etc. Keep it simple and add only those skills you're hoping to get hired for NOW.

Last note about tone in your Overview: don't look desperate. Folks, this is absolutely crucial. This is especially important if you are a newbie to the Upwork platform. First of all, desperation does not sound very professional. Trust me, no one wants to hire a whiny little baby. Second, it makes you look like you have more *need* than *skill*. This isn't a GoFundMe campaign—it's a marketplace for skilled workers. Desperation is a cheap way to try to corner someone into a contract. You don't want people's pity parties… you want solid working relationships with clients who know you can do the job—because you can.

This is an abundant marketplace. If any given job doesn't work out, there are plenty more coming through the pipe every minute.

In fact, taking this idea up one notch… not only do you NOT want to look desperate, but at some point in your Upwork journey, you should try to add an aura of exclusivity to your Overview. A sort of "Hey, my time is scarce, so I can't work with everyone who reaches out to me, but get in touch to see if we might be a good fit."

And, folks, this is absolutely true. The gods of Time have gifted each one of us with only a finite number of hours in the day. You can't (and don't want to) work with every client on Upwork. You only want to work with clients who will pay you well and give you good vibes.

The other aspects of the profile will include these things: Upwork Work History, Portfolio, Skills and Expertise, Your Project Catalog, Testimonials (from clients outside of Upwork), Certifications, Employment History, and Other Experiences.

The **Work History** is displayed showing all the jobs you've done on Upwork so far, both jobs still in progress and completed jobs, along with the amount per hour you earned on each. This area of your profile will show how much money you have earned so far on each job in the system, along with how many hours you've worked.

Also here in this section, the clients' reviews will appear. **Reviews**, or **Feedback**, as Upwork calls it, are your mainstay—they are what will keep you rising up in the ranks of freelancers. Reviews are the social

proof clients are looking for and make them want to hire you. It is important to show other clients liked you and loved your work. One of the biggest problems clients face is workers ducking out on jobs midway through. The review shows you not only got to the end of the contract, but the client was wowed by the work you did for them—enough to take the time to leave positive feedback!

Your hourly rate will prove to future clients you're worth what you're asking. People will see you have done work here on this platform and you've gotten paid a certain amount. This is proof enough, even before the reviews start coming in.

Your **Portfolio** is where you can add any past work you'd like to show clients, again as proof you have the chops to do the jobs they need doing. You've done it before—this ain't your first rodeo. Therefore, you should proudly showcase your work here in the Portfolio.

I would suggest not including bad examples of work you've done. It's better to have fewer items in your portfolio than it is to use work that was poorly done, unskilled, or just not something you were proud of.

Under **Skills and Expertise**, you'll basically list out all those professional things you can do for clients. Upwork gives you hundreds of skills to choose from, so add as many as they allow. When clients search for talent, the system matches skills listed under the freelancer's profile with the skills the client is looking for. The keywords you add for each of your skills are searchable, which helps clients find you more easily.

So don't be afraid to add any and all things you can do in this section. Some skills might be more general than others—for instance, copywriting, English grammar, or research. Others might be especially technical: Infusionsoft, mobile application development, or DaVinci Resolve video editing.

Your **Project Catalog** is a really cool new way to earn on Upwork. It basically allows you as a freelancer to offer a digital shelf of up to 20 services to clients. Clients can sift through these services and choose what they need help with. Each project comes with a set cost, timeline, and package of deliverables.

If you're a freelancer who finds yourself doing the same jobs for

people repeatedly, this might be a great way to translate all of your knowledge and experience into a package deal clients can click on and buy. Upwork tells us on the Profile page that Project Catalog "helps you do more of the work you love to do. Create project offerings that highlight your strengths and attract more clients."

This feature is really great for clients too, since it lets them scroll through projects people commonly purchase or need. Project Catalog bundles up the important details of cost, scope, timing, and deliverables so clients can know exactly what to expect when they decide to buy. Also, they can skip a lot of wasted effort advertising for a job, scrutinizing a ton of proposals, and conducting interviews with multiple freelance candidates. Instead, they can "shop" what they're looking for on Project Catalog, select the package they'd like to buy, and get straight to work.

Project Catalog can potentially save time for freelancers as well, since they don't have to spend quite so many tiresome hours reading through job postings and submitting proposals. They also won't need to laboriously explain to potential clients what they can offer, how much it will cost, and how long it will take. They can simply package up their most commonly asked-for projects and wait for the clients to pour in.

If you have a service that is small and can be productized, Project Catalog would be a great thing for you to explore. However, if you typically involve yourself in only complex projects, you might want to stay away from Project Catalog for those kinds of things.

I really see Project Catalog as the next frontier for the Upwork platform, beyond just trading time for money. You can still continue doing this, of course, but Project Catalog also allows you to showcase a storefront of your services—and it can be a great tripwire that leads to bigger deals.

The **Testimonials** section is the place where you can import testimonials from clients you have worked with in the past, both inside and outside of Upwork. For those clients you might have off of the Upwork system, there is a simple form that will email those people directly, asking them to submit feedback to your Upwork Profile. Once it's verified by the system, the testimonial will be displayed.

Upwork wants you to win. When you win, they win. So they make it easy for you to offer social proof, including those good reviews from clients who worked with you before your days on Upwork.

Some freelancers may have specific **Certifications** they want to proudly showcase. If you have achieved a certification in any field—maybe you're an Accredited Tax Advisor (ATA) or a Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH) or an Oracle Certified Expert—then, by all means, select these from the drop-down menu provided so they'll show up on your Profile. Some fields don't really have any certifications, so whether you use this section or not depends upon your profession.

Employment History is the area where you would add past professional jobs off of Upwork. Dig out the resume and type your past work experiences into your profile. Every little bit helps, so if any of your past jobs are relevant to the kind of freelance gigs you're looking for, be sure to include those.

Last, the Profile includes a section for **Other Experiences**. This empty text box is wide open for you to include any other professional involvement you'd like to tell people about. Maybe there are volunteer things you've done that are relevant to your field? Or perhaps your hobbies are somehow related to the skills you're selling. Whatever it is, the Other Experiences section offers an opportunity to round out your profile in the most professional way possible.

USE AN SEO STRATEGY

A profile rich with keywords will help you get noticed and float you to the top of clients' searches AND Upwork's listings of possible freelancers, thanks to Upwork's algorithm.

Let's say you're a proofreader. You're great at this work and can help people perfectly polish their writing before they send it out. Well, what in God's name do you need to think of algorithms for, right? You're a proofreader, damn it, not a statistician. Actually, though, this is a huge deal and key to building your business on the Upwork platform.

Upwork is an online marketplace with millions of users. It's easy for your little self to get lost in the ocean of all the other fish trying to

get fed. The way you rise to the top of the ocean, winning all those delicious invites and bids, is to make yourself uniquely stand out.

The first thing you need to think about is creating a profile packed full of keywords that helps you get noticed. Consider an SEO strategy for your profile, so you're positioning yourself to get seen by the right buyers more frequently.

To do this, first figure out what your passion is. Then hit on all the language people tend to use when they think about the process of your work and the results. For instance, if you work as a social media specialist, think about the words surrounding that skill. *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* are a few. Or how about *followers*, *likes*, *stories*? People who use social media for business are trying to build a tribe of followers who will eventually convert to buyers, right? So you need to list all of those words—the concepts, skills, or end results—that describe how you will help the client be successful with their social media.

When clients post their jobs, the freelancers who spring up at first are people who have the skills they're looking for. Folks, this is the way the Upwork algorithm works. You have to think about SEO to help you get jobs.

CREATE SPECIALIZED PROFILES

When you are piecing together your profile, you will have the opportunity to add subcategories of your specializations by creating Specialized Profiles. On my profile, I have three. I would suggest using as many as Upwork allows to showcase all the skills you have to offer the world. I believe in casting your net far and wide as a way of building your own marketing funnel within Upwork's platform.

Upwork explains how Specialized Profiles help freelancers highlight the various types of work they do, customize their overviews, rates, work history, and portfolio items for each specialty, and market each of their Specialized Profiles with category-specific skills.

One word about setting your hourly rates for your Specialized Profiles. I actually make all my hourly prices the same for each of my specialized profiles. My time is my time, right? My main product is my

time—for such-and-such per hour, the client gets an hour of ME sitting at my computer, working on their project. That's really all there is to it. As such, I value my time. I know my time is scarce. And I'm not willing to work for fewer dollars per hour for one task than I am for another.

MAKE A VIDEO

One of the best ways to create a strong profile is to include a video. And don't agonize about this thing, okay? The video is *crucial* for getting jobs, but don't sweat it so much you never get to the task of making it. You don't need a Sony Alpha A7 digital camera. Just do it on your phone. It's not rocket science. Don't overthink it!

A lot of people are nervous as heck to make a video since they don't like how they look or sound on screen. Maybe they don't want a video of themselves on the Internet. Not to be rude, but if this is you, then Upwork might be the wrong platform for you. While making a video might be outside of your comfort zone, facing this fear and conquering it will get you on your way to a successful freelance career.

For my video many years ago, I used a broken lamp arm to hold my phone as a tripod for filming. In this makeshift selfie-mode, I just pushed record and started talking. I introduced myself with conviction and confidence, showing I am trustworthy and competent. I essentially went over what was in my bio and reiterated some of my past notable clients and described the platforms I know well.

Going over all this stuff in your video will save you from having to do it when you get the client on the phone for the initial interview.

Actually, I still use that same video on my Upwork profile today.

This video does not need to be perfect or perfectly professional. You only need to show people you're a real human being they can connect with. Show you're friendly, easy to work with, and reachable.

What should you talk about in your video? Well, first just introduce yourself. "Hi, I'm Adam. And I'm a rock star at Internet marketing." List your skills, the software you use, and all the value you can add for clients. Sound professional and confident, but stay humble. Detail what you can do, but try not to bag off. Show people you're a nice,

friendly guy or gal who can solve their problems—and you've done it before for other clients.

If you do this video correctly, you won't have to talk awkwardly about yourself in the interview with a potential client. Your video will make the client feel as if they already know you. Before they even get you on the phone, they'll have a sense of familiarity with you, which will get them one step closer in their head to hiring you.

I was so glad I made my video because it started converting into clients. That's why, to this day, I feel this one action—making a video for my profile—got me started with my first Upwork gig and completely changed my life.

I was able to earn enough money to buy that plane ticket to go to Belgium to visit my then-girlfriend. But that was only the beginning.

WRITING PROPOSALS
THAT LAND GIGS

Writing winning proposals is one of the great keys to succeeding on Upwork. This is one of the major skills you'll need to learn to start your freelance career with a bang. Upwork lists thousands of jobs every day. However, you're not the only freelancer applying for these jobs, so you need to make sure your proposal captures the client's attention right off the bat.

Most often, the way a client hires a freelancer is by selecting someone from the list of proposals (which are basically job applications) they receive when they post their job. Think of it as a real-time job application process. Any job cover letter you submit needs to be professional, authentic, and honest. Your proposal needs to be all of these things as well.

Most of all, your proposal needs to stand out from the competition. That's the only way the client will be moved to click on you, read about you, and send you a message.

At some point in your freelancing career on Upwork, you'll have gained a solid enough reputation where the clients will begin coming to you. However, when you are first starting out, the art of the proposal will be one of the biggest things you'll need to learn to land clients.

As a freelancer on Upwork, I use my skills as a digital marketing

and online automation expert to pull down some pretty good money. I have even started an agency on Upwork, leveraging my skills through other freelancers and offering a full-package deal to most of my clients. Life is good!

In my role as a freelancer who hires other freelancers on this platform, I often find myself on the client's side of the platform, analyzing applicants to help me with various gigs. For instance, I might hire a content writer or a ghostwriter or a graphic designer.

I can't do it all, folks. When my freelancer career started taking off, I realized very quickly I needed help from people with a variety of skills.

Long story short, sometimes I'm a freelancer on Upwork submitting proposals. Other times, I'm a client reading through proposals to see who I want to hire. Because I wear both hats, I have a unique perspective on what works and what doesn't work when it comes to writing a good, quality proposal that gets clients to say YES.

DON'T OVERSELL

Let's say you just found the perfect job posting on Upwork. You think to yourself, "OMG, if I got this job, I would be one happy camper." You drool a little bit, thinking what a feather in your cap this would be. Next step: write a killer proposal that will make you stand out from the likely crowded pool of applicants and land you the job.

You're excited. I get that. But, you don't want to sound like a puppy with a small bladder. Keep your proposal cool and professional, okay?

Don't oversell—it's annoying. Please don't blindside the client with every professional experience you've ever had, all the degrees you've earned, and every one of the bragging rights you've accumulated over the years. You might think the client wants to know everything you can do. This is false. They just want to know the pertinent details of who you are and how you can help.

Keep your proposal simple and pure. Get in, introduce yourself, show you understand what the job entails, offer some ideas for how you can help, and get the heck out.

Okay, so you can also add in a couple samples of your work. But

you don't have to recreate your profile, where all this proof of how wonderful you are already lives. Your first reach-out should only impress them enough—no more, no less—to get them to agree to a phone interview.

Don't include your life story in the proposal. The goal is not verbosity. It is simply to show the client how your profile applies to their job. You can probably do all of this in just a few paragraphs. If it's any longer than this, you may actually put a busy client off, causing them to skip past your proposal without even reading it.

Now it's true you want to show your value and talk about how you can solve their problem. However, you shouldn't come up with a complete, comprehensive strategy for how you would carry out the project. That's a little overkill, and it might not sit well. You might come across as bossy or egotistical, implying you know better than the client about what needs to be done before you've even talked with them on the phone.

I truly believe long-winded proposals are a waste of time. When I see one of these bad boys in my applicant pool, I roll my eyes and mutter, "*Here we go.*"

The purpose of the proposal is to develop rapport. It is to intrigue the client enough to want to talk to you more. The purpose is NOT to list out everything you've ever wanted to tell a potential client.

You're not writing a book here. You're just writing a little note. So keep it in check!

DON'T CUT AND PASTE

Regarding cutting and pasting your proposal from the last one you sent—DON'T. Just… don't.

First of all, no client wants to receive a cookie-cutter, generic proposal used to apply to ten jobs. Instead, clients want to feel you read their job posting and you're responding specifically to them. Your prospect to think, in no uncertain terms, you are communicating with them and them alone.

You might not know their name when you write the proposal, but try to imagine an actual person on the other end. Sometimes in the

online world, it's hard to remember there is a real human being reading your communication.

Envision that person. Pretend you're talking directly to them. What would you say? It probably *wouldn't* be: "Greetings, Kind Sir. I would like to apply for this position. I know I can be of assistance to you. Please consider my application and let me know if you have any questions about me. Sincerely, Dumb Shit Freelancer."

Trust me, you will not get a response if you write something like this. It sounds spammy, and it will certainly get ignored.

Secondly, copied and pasted proposals just don't sound authentic. The tone comes across as robotic and stiff. You need to read (and thoroughly digest) the job posting and write back a unique response. Please, sound human. Sound like yourself. This is the best way to get the client to trust you. If they don't trust you, they'll skim past your proposal faster than you can blink. Why bother writing a proposal you know the client won't actually read? You might as well take a pee in a gale-force wind.

Third, Upwork has ways of knowing if you are just copying and pasting. If they catch wind you're doing this, you risk being demoted. It might sound like Big Brother is watching, but they perceive copying and pasting as spamming and punish you by putting your proposal to the very bottom of the heap. Why do they do this? To discourage freelancers from being lazy.

Every single cover letter I've ever written is fresh and new because I don't want to be seen as a joke by either Upwork or the client. Take the time to write out what you want to say to *this specific client*. Think critically about their needs and what you can do to help.

If your proposal is too long, it will definitely appear to be copied-and-pasted trickery to the client. How else would you have had the time to write pages and pages?

I'm not trying to sound bossy here, and I know writing proposal after proposal can get tedious and time-consuming. However, you really need to customize every single proposal you write. It will take you a little more time, that's true. But you will reap the benefits. Acting and sounding like an authentic person will show the client you've

taken the time to read their post, you have chosen to apply in good faith, and you are a suitable candidate for the job.

DON'T SOUND LIKE AN IDIOT

Upwork uses its algorithms to choose the three "best matches" for the job and pins these to the top of the list of proposals sent to the client. If you don't seem like the best fit for the job, your proposal will land somewhere down the list. Trust me, from my experience on the client side, Upwork is usually spot-on about their top choices.

The best way to get Upwork to think you're a prime candidate? Don't sound like an idiot.

Upwork knows who the bad people are, and they put them at the bottom. They partly base their opinion on a freelancer's stats. Things like job success score, number of hours worked, past earnings, and reviews play a part. These are things you can only finesse over time, so don't worry too much until you have a few jobs under your belt.

For freelancers new to Upwork without many stats to speak of, it's especially important to get the proposal right. As a client, I will take a chance on a newbie but only if you sound authentically human, relatively intelligent, able to do the job, and friendly. If these things don't add up, I won't give you a shot. I will not read your proposal for long, and I definitely won't scroll down to where Upwork adds your profile information. Instead, I'll just keep looking at the other candidates and ignore your cover letter.

If your cover letter is not perfect, why should a client take a chance on you? Upwork has already given clients three solid choices at the top, so you won't have a snowball's chance in hell of getting hired if you're number four (or lower) AND your proposal sucks.

Don't write a book, but also don't make your proposal too short. This will look copied and pasted (see above—argh), but it will also seem as though you have no idea what you're talking about. If the proposal is too short and vague, it will look like you haven't even read the job posting. Try not to sound too general... Instead, be specific about what you can do to help the client.

Also, a word on how to address the client. If you know their name,

use it. How do you feel when you read a piece of junk mail addressed to "Resident"? It's important to personalize as much as possible, so try to use their name if they include it in the listing.

Additionally, you might be able to find their first name if you take the time to read through some of the reviews other freelancers have left about them. "Doug was a great client to work with! I'd totally recommend DOUG." There you go. "Dear Doug" it is.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE (BUT… DON'T SACRIFICE QUALITY)

Proposals are not listed in chronological order—in the order they were posted by freelancers—but rather by relevance, based on Upwork's algorithms. Many people think they need to jump on the job quickly, so their proposal lands at the top of the list, but this is not the way it works.

That said, it is important to apply for a job within a day or two, simply because many times clients don't want to wait days or weeks to hire someone. They likely have a pressing need, so if you see something you want to apply for, don't delay.

However, applying quickly does not mean you should spew out your proposal so fast it looks like a kindergartener wrote it. Be thoughtful. Take some time. Think about why you want this job and how you can help the client solve their problem. And then apply, with care and mindfulness.

Otherwise, you're wasting your time.

CONSIDER YOUR TONE

When you're writing your proposal, try to think about how you will come across. The tone you take with a client is very important. You don't want to sound too casual, but you also don't want to sound too formal.

A lot of people think that, since Upwork is an online forum, they can take a familiar tone with a potential client. They make jokes and sound unceremoniously glib, as though the client is a buddy or someone they already know. This is a mistake, however. As a free-

lancer applying for work, you should be professional. You have no idea who is on the other end of the connection. Your spontaneous way might not be appreciated by the client.

That said, don't sound so overly formal you come across as spam, either. You know the tone I mean: "Greetings Kind Sir or Madam, Please accept my application for your worthwhile job posting. I hope that I shall meet your requirements for employment…" Blah blah blah. There's no way any client in their right mind would take that kind of tone seriously. So leave your formal language at the door when you sit down to write your proposal.

THE ESSENTIALS OF SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

On the job post page, you'll see a button that says, "Submit a Proposal." Click here, and this will take you to the page where you can enter in certain information and apply for the job. The first thing you'll need to decide is whether to apply with your general profile or one of your specialized profiles. This will be the profile that this particular client will see when they check you out.

You'll need to add the rate you'd like to bid on the job. The rate will default to the rate you have advertised on your profile.

If you subscribe to Upwork's Freelancer Plus Plan ($14.99/month), you'll be able to see the exact range of bids already made by other freelancers. This can help you decide where you want to land your bid.

The next and last section is the most important part: the cover letter. There are many strategies for writing winning cover letters in your proposal, some of which I talked about above. Basically, though, you want to write a professional, friendly letter that shows the client you understand their needs and describes how you can help them, using your experience as a basis. The client needs to trust you here, so make sure you sound like a human being.

Also, another little tip about cover letters is this: On the client's list of proposals, their screen will show them just the first little snippet of the freelancer's cover letter. That's why your first two or three lines must be compelling and make the client want to click to expand your proposal.

In one of their tutorial videos, Upwork suggests keeping your cover letter "short, honest, and relevant." That about says it all!

TESTING IT OUT

As a newbie freelancer, you might have to play around with different strategies for writing your proposal to see what works best. Always stay friendly and helpful, but you can test different tones, styles, introductory lines, and the kinds of information you add. When you see what works, keep using that strategy.

HOW TO USE THE INTERVIEW TO GET THE JOB

After you've learned how to write a stellar proposal, clients will begin responding to you. In many cases, especially for larger gigs, they'll ask if you would like to jump on a Zoom or phone call to talk more.

Folks, this is the sales call. This is where you sell yourself and land the job. *Jeez*, you're probably thinking. *I've already jumped through all these other hoops, and now I have to talk on the phone too?*

Yes, you do. The phone call is the client's chance to get to know you, to make sure you seem like someone they want to work with, and to ensure you can put words together in a reasonably intelligent way.

When you first get on the phone, stick to small talk for a minute or two. This will ease your nerves and let the client get to know you.

Don't forget the client will already have looked you up, read through your profile, maybe even cyber-stalked you online for a few minutes. If you created a video, they probably watched it and feel a little familiar with you. Be confident. If they already looked you up to this extent and still want to talk to you, they're probably a fan. This phone call is likely just the last formality before they welcome you onboard.

THE GOOD NEWS

Here's the thing: In the traditional freelancing world, you'll have sales calls out the wazoo where would-be clients want to ask you how your process works, what skills you have, and what you can offer them. Then you talk money—and guess what happens then? They thank you politely, tell you they'll think about it, and then… fricking crickets. They go away, into that nebulous na-na land so many leads disappear into.

With Upwork, however, this prospect came to you because they want to hire you. They are not tire-kicking. They are not checking your prices (they already know exactly what you will charge). They are not still thinking about it. They got on Upwork because they have a problem that needs to be solved, they have money to solve it, and they clearly intend to select a freelancer to get it done. Whether or not it's you…? Well, that is up to you.

Because of these key differences between the Upwork client and the traditional client, you don't have to be as nervous about the Upwork sales call. You still have to make a good impression, but you'll be starting from a stronger place.

FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIP, NOT ON THE SALE

When I speak with clients, I don't ask about their budgets. I don't give a shit about their budget because I know it will change. All I care about is whether they like me and they can pay my hourly rate.

During this phone conversation, just take it easy and focus on the relationship, not on the sale. Once you've established a good rapport with the client, they'll want to work with you.

The main thing I try to discuss is how I can help them. To this end, I listen carefully to them as they explain what they need. I ask about their pain points. What do they need me to solve?

When I offer possible solutions and ways I can help, I am careful not to seem arrogant. I look to see if I can give some value, but be careful. Just because I have the expertise they don't have doesn't mean I

get to rub it in their face. The only consequence of that kind of behavior is a swift "no thank you" from the client.

Trust me, I've been on both sides of the table, and there are a lot of flashy freelancers out there. Don't be one of them. The point of the sales call is for you to sell yourself to the client. You want them to like you. This is the time to establish a solid, positive relationship for working together.

TRY TO AGREE ON A MICRO-COMMITMENT

One strategy I've used in closing deals is to try to get the client to make at least a micro-commitment. Here's the thing: if you're talking to a client about a particularly big job, it might be difficult for them to hit the send-it button. They want to get to know you first. They want to understand how you work. In my field, I use this strategy by first offering the client a mind map.

Creating a mind map is a small job I do for a client that takes me about two hours. Basically, a mind map is an organizational, goal-setting tool that will help a person lay out the steps, goals, and plans of a project in a visual way. As a digital marketing professional, I create mind maps that offer clients a visual of all the methods they can use to market their companies.

Providing this small organizational task is a service clients love. Plus, it gives them a taste of what I can do for them if they keep going with the job. This is a great little automated way to get leads, since... one thing can lead to another… and before you know it, a small job turns into a larger, possibly long-term project.

The cool thing about getting the client to agree to a micro-commitment is, in doing this, you are establishing your time is worth X per hour. The client starts to think of you as a $45/hour person or a $115/hour person right from the get-go.

THE INTERVIEW MIGHT BE THE START OF SOMETHING SPECIAL

Always remember, a small job on Upwork could turn into a long-term gig. And the way this happens is the client really likes you and your

work. You're helpful to them, so they keep offering you more and more work. This is when things start to get really easy for you as a freelancer, since you won't have to spend hours laboriously scrolling through new job postings and writing proposals. Instead, the work will start coming to you.

When you talk to a client in the interview, don't forget they're a real person. Just because they're someone you met online doesn't mean you can't get to know them and try to understand how they tick. Some of my best contracts came from people who I really jived with online. They could see I was an expert and I knew what I was talking about. Most importantly, we clicked. We hit it off.

The more authentic and open you are, the more you'll be able to build trust with the clients you talk to. And building trust helps you forge solid, long-lasting relationships. That's the key to achieving real success on Upwork.

Every relationship begins with a conversation. So use the first interview to get to know someone. I would even call several of my current clients friends, to the point we just call each other up to chat. Don't underestimate the power of being curious, kind, and accessible in your conversations with clients. You don't necessarily have to become friends, but doesn't everything just flow more smoothly when you're at least friendly?

However, be careful not to be an energy vampire. Just because a client asks you how your day is doesn't mean they have an hour to hear about all of the craziness you've got going in your life. Read the room. If the client really wants to know about that stuff, then great. But, if not, try to respect their time and land the plane quickly when explaining things.

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART

I should note that not all of these initial interactions with clients will go well. You might not be enthusiastic about the job. Please, if for any reason you don't want the job, don't take it. Listen to your heart, your gut, your third eye… whatever body part it is that people listen to for wisdom. If anything makes you uncomfortable about the job—whether

it's the demeanor of the client, the tasks, the topic of work, the pay—don't pursue the gig any further.

Look for clients that are right for you. You don't want to pursue work that isn't right for you. If you take a job and don't like it for some reason, your heart won't be in it and you probably won't do your best work, anyway. Trust me, there are sooo many jobs out there that you don't have to settle.

HOW TO RESPOND TO "INVITATIONS TO INTERVIEW"

Once you get established on Upwork as a quality freelancer, jobs will begin flowing into your inbox. Clients will start seeing you in their searches as a recommended freelancer and will reach out to recruit you.

When you respond to these invitations to interview, it's okay to be brief. Your primary goal here is to thank them and then take them to the next step in your freelance funnel: the phone call.

The most important thing to do when you get invited to an interview is to respond within 24 hours. Slow responses impact the communication section of your client satisfaction score and will drop you in Upwork's algorithm. So, whether you want to accept the invitation or decline it, just do it promptly.

Accepting the invite is the preferred response, even if the job isn't perfect for you. The reason is when you "accept" the invite, you can then communicate with the client about other possible help the client may need. Kindly accept it, but let them know you may not be the best fit. Remember, this platform is all about relationships, and most clients need multiple things done. If a client likes you, they'll throw you in on something else.

Responding to interview invitations does not cost you connects, which is just one more way you'll gain momentum as a freelancer.

You might choose to decline the interview. Maybe the work is not up your alley, or the job doesn't pay enough. You might have too much work on your plate at the moment, or the client doesn't seem very strong.

In some cases, the client and job might seem spammy to you, or maybe the client is asking you to work for free. In these cases, you can actually block future communication from that client. Snitch to Upwork on these people. There's no place on this system for people who want to abuse other people's time, and Upwork also hates this.

Whatever the reason, you definitely don't have to interview for jobs you don't want. Just because you're invited to the party doesn't mean you have to attend. So just click "Decline" and get on with your life.

Even if you do decide to decline, it's not a bad idea to include a personalized message—a simple "thanks but no thanks." If it's the right job at the wrong time, you might want to keep the connection open just in case the client has future work.

Some of the jobs you'll be invited to interview for will seem like a perfect fit for your freelance business. In these cases, you'll want to write a personalized response. This message to the client should establish a connection. If you can, use the keywords the client themselves used in their job posting. Keep the letter about them, focusing on their pain points, and then get on to how you can help. Describe your experience. Be brief and succinct—again, no need to bag off here.

At the end of your message, add some kind of call to action. For example, "I'd love to talk more about this job to see if we'd be a good fit. When would be a good time to jump on a call?"

PART THREE
GROWING YOUR FREELANCE BUSINESS ON UPWORK

In Part Two, I tried to cover all the basics of how to get started on Upwork as a newbie freelancer. In this chapter, I want to take it a step further and teach you how to springboard yourself from a low-paid rookie into a six-figure champion.

Probably just about anyone can earn a little sideline spending cash on a freelancing platform like this. If that's where you want to go, then that's great for you. There's definitely always an open door to get in for a $15 or $25 hourly rate and do small jobs here and there. This is totally cool and definitely possible with Upwork. If this is all you're after, you can go ahead and skip this next chapter.

However... If you TRULY want Upwork to save your life, as it did mine, if you passionately need to make a more-than-solid income using only your skills, your determination, and your computer, then read on.

When I began on Upwork, I was in survival mode. Now that I've made over a million dollars on Upwork, I want to help you take that leap from just understanding the Upwork platform to categorically mastering it.

CREATE A LONG-TERM PLAN

irst things first. If you want to truly rock it in this business, you're going to need a plan. When I first started on Upwork as a freelancer, I set some pretty wild goals for myself. A few of them were:

- Increase my rate to $500/hour (check).
- Make over half a million dollars (check).
- Become Top Rated (check).
- Have over 100 clients (check).
- Become THE top earner on Upwork (pending…).

I'm not trying to rub my success in your face. I'm actually just impressed with myself that I've completed most of my goals. In fact, I surpassed them since I've now made over one million dollars freelancing on the Upwork platform, earn *at least* my targeted $500/hour rate, and have moved on from "Top Rated" to "Expert Vetted," which means I'm among the top one percent of Upwork's freelancers. And all this started from that first $45 fixed-price gig.

Honestly, I still really can't believe it.

I can't stress enough how important it is to create goals and then a system to achieve those goals. Only through setting a long-term plan

will you be able to fully grow and realize your true potential. In addition, upfront planning can help you stay on track and minimize the stress of starting your new freelance enterprise.

Let's step back and consider the big picture for a minute.

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

According to Lawrence J. Peter, a Canadian management theorist, "If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else." Deciding your purpose is crucial to your success as a freelancer. If you don't know where you're going, trust me, you will never, ever get there.

What is your ultimate goal in freelancing? Are you in for the long haul, to earn a substantial yearly income? Or are you just looking for a few extra bucks on the side? What is your passion, and how can you help other people (i.e., your clients), in pursuing that passion? If you love to read books, for instance, then you could freelance as a beta reader for books about to be published. If you have a way with words, you could begin work as a copywriter, an editor, or a proofreader.

A sense of purpose is something not many of us cultivate. We sometimes just barge through life without too much self-reflection. What do you believe in? What do you value? What motivates you? These are all questions you should ask yourself. When you take a step back to consider your purpose, you'll be better equipped to figure out what your new work life will look like, how much time you'll be spending, and what you will earn.

WHAT SERVICES ARE YOU OFFERING?

Along with your purpose, you'll of course need to consider the most essential question: *What work will I do?*

To answer this, ask yourself these questions:

- What skills do I have?
- What work lights me up?
- What kinds of things am I good at?

These questions can help focus your job search efforts so you don't waste a lot of time barking up the wrong trees.

You can research what clients are looking for and what other freelancers in your field look like. You can also go off the Upwork platform to learn more about the work you'd like to do. Let's go back to that copywriting example, for instance. If you're a newcomer to that expertise, you can read everything you can about copywriting and build up your knowledge.

Once you decide on a service to offer, start looking for jobs. Keep in mind your list of skills will expand with time. In the beginning, apply for anything you can do. In your long-term plan, you can predict skills you'll need to add down the road and set goals for when you'll learn them.

HOW WILL YOU SELL YOUR SERVICES?

Armed with what you're learning here in these pages, it's time to set a plan for how you will go about selling your services. How many clients will you reach out to per day or per week? Will you target various kinds of jobs or niche yourself down into one type of work?

The longer you work on Upwork, the higher your job success score will rise. You'll have more social proof in the form of reviews, and Upwork will nudge you up in their algorithms. This means you'll need to write proposals less often since you'll be receiving invitations to interview from clients directly.

In any case, a freelancer who stops selling is a freelancer who stops working. So never quit figuring out how best to impress both current and potential clients. Your long-term success on Upwork depends upon you learning how to find and retain good quality clients who are willing to pay you well for your work.

WHAT MILESTONES WILL YOU SET FOR YOURSELF?

Setting realistic milestones is the backbone of any successful business, and a freelancing business is no different. You not only need to know

WHAT you want to do, but you also need to know WHEN it will happen.

Giving yourself clear deadlines is crucial to achieving success. If you don't have a targeted date of completion, trust me, your To-Do list will just kind of fade off into nothing.

Milestone goals might include:

- Having X number of clients within 6 months.
- Sending X number of proposals in 1 month.
- Earning X amount of money in the next 1, 3, 6, or 12 months.
- Collecting X number of reviews by a certain date.

Of course, these goals could morph, depending on a lot of factors. Be patient with yourself—don't beat yourself up too much if you can't achieve something exactly on time—but also don't be surprised if you surpass your goals and get to the finish line sooner than expected! Setting goals is a fun way to quantify your success and motivate yourself to keep going.

From the moment I got on Upwork, I knew this was much more than a gig marketplace for low wage earners. I started with one small, fixed-price gig, and it blossomed into a 20K project. My computer was literally turned into a freaking ATM machine. People who post jobs on this site are not tire-kickers; they are ready to hire. They want stuff done, and they are waiting for the right person to come along and take away their problem.

Having a clear plan that includes your purpose, your services, your selling technique, and your timeline is an important step to getting yourself to where you want to be: financial glory through freelancing.

WHEN/HOW TO INCREASE YOUR RATE

On Upwork, you can realistically earn more than you've ever made and continue to grow—if you want! There are people who make zero, but there are also many like me who consistently earn six figures plus every year.

When you first start out on the system, you shouldn't be afraid to start small with a couple of fixed-price jobs. That's how I started, after all. It's a great way to gain some traction, build relationships, and hopefully land a couple of very positive reviews. Start with a rate you truly feel you're worth and will keep you fully engaged. Think of these smaller jobs as steppingstones to the real jobs you will soon be getting.

After you've graduated from fixed-price jobs, you can move on to hourly. Starting at a lower rate means you can rise up, build credibility, and not look like a shyster.

But just because you start at a lower rate doesn't mean you stay there. Eventually, your time will become more valuable, and you will raise your rate. The idea here is to keep extending yourself, learning new things, and making more and more money.

GIVE YOURSELF A RAISE

I simply love the fact Upwork provides an amazing way to quantify the value of my time. Giving myself a raise after completing a project has always been a great incentive for me to keep working and growing.

Just because Upwork doesn't increase your rate automatically doesn't mean you shouldn't. As a freelancer, you're not working for the Man anymore—you are in charge of your own destiny.

Upscaling your hourly is a strategy not possible in a typical 9-5. Doubling your hourly rate—tripling it—is a doable thing. It's not some kind of pie in the sky philosophy.

Now that you're gaining some traction on the system, you need to take a step back and consider:

- What is my time worth?
- How do I value my time?
- How many hours do I want to work?
- How much time do I want to work?

The more you work, the less time you will have. This is when you start to raise your rate. It's really just a case of supply and demand, isn't it? Your time becomes a scarce resource. Also, you'll be gaining wisdom and accumulating knowledge, thus becoming more valuable.

You won't need to compete for jobs as much. The tables will turn, and clients will start coming to you and competing for your time.

Generally, I like to think of it like this:

REVIEWS + EXPERIENCE + CONFIDENCE = HIGHER RATE

This means your hourly rate should only continue to climb. Think of it like a game. Give yourself a raise after every successful project as a way of rewarding yourself for a job well done. This will help incentivize you to go above and beyond the project to ensure your client is thrilled. Push through any challenges, even if it means spending some of your own time solving an issue.

With each completed job, make sure you lock in a good review which will serve as quantifiable and justifiable proof you're worth your rate. You'll be able to leverage these reviews for your next project. Your increasing rate will communicate to potential clients that they will be missing out if they don't book you now, since you're only getting more expensive—and other clients are tripping over themselves in asking you to work for them. Clients will see your experience rising along with your rates, and they won't try to negotiate a better rate. In fact, they'll feel some fire under their feet to lock in your current rate now, before it goes up.

THINK OF YOURSELF AS A CORPORATION

If you want your freelancing career to fully sustain you and not just be a side hustle, then you should go beyond thinking of yourself as a freelancer. Instead, think of yourself as a company or corporation.

As a corporation, you will need to fulfill various roles. This will be true mostly in the very beginning when you need to wear all of the hats until you can afford to hire help. Once you're established, of course, you'll be able to bring on lower-wage people to fill some of the needs of your corporation. This is the way to grow and become more efficient. We will talk more about hiring other freelancers a bit further along in the book.

As I mentioned in the beginning of the book, your corporation has a stock price. As a freelancer, think of your hourly rate as the "stock price." Your "dividends" will come in the form of any passive sales you might have through joining software affiliate programs, which often have partner programs that allow users to split revenue when they refer customers to them.

The "products" of your corporation are 1) your time, and 2) any bundled scopes of work you may have up for sale on Upwork's new Project Catalog.

Last, your corporation's "employees" would be any other freelancers you work with.

If you can think of yourself as a corporation, and your hourly rate as your company's stock price, you can better understand how valu-

able your time is. With experience and social proof, you'll also begin to see how your time is increasing in value.

When a company is succeeding, the stock price goes up. People who have invested in your company are happy they are matched with a winner. If your company continues to do well, your stock price can go sky-high!

People are addicted to the stock market because of the endorphins that trigger when stock prices go up. Unfortunately, in the stock market, stocks can go down, which never feels great. However, with your "corporation," your "stock price" can never go down.

Why not, you ask? Well, because you can neither *unlearn* the wisdom you gained nor *unachieve* all of the skills and reviews you acquired.

With an increase in skills and positive reviews, your job success score, your rating, and your hourly rate all go UP. This has been one of the most rewarding aspects of working on Upwork for me since my rising "stock price" makes every minute I work exciting!

DON'T DROP YOUR RATE

It's not called "Downwork," right? So don't play that game!

If you're hearing me right, you'll see I'm a proponent of starting small and building gradually higher. Please notice I say nothing about dropping your rate. You never want to do that, since it makes you look doubtful about your abilities and desperate to succeed at any price. Doubtful and desperate. Definitely two words you don't want to be.

Upwork has "up" built into its name for a reason.

Dropping your price is a bad move. You don't want to sound like you're at the end of your rope, or even think that way. Definitely don't cut deals with people just to get work. The clients who want deals are going to be your biggest problem clients. Here's the thing: You don't need to do this. After a few small gigs, you should be gaining incremental confidence. You should understand your time is valuable. Don't allow yourself to go backward. There's no reason for that.

Clients should see your price going up, not down. That is the best kind of social proof.

This is why I often suggest starting small. You need to feel out the market and understand what people are willing to pay. Also, remember you're new to this system, so you need to build some credibility. You want the clients to believe in you. Yes, this takes some time. But with a little patience, you'll get to the rate you deserve—and probably keep going!

Plus, the idea of starting small and giving yourself raises is such a fun incentive and lets you treat your freelance career like a game. I don't know about you, but I like to celebrate my successes in life with little rewards. Watching the hourly rate on your profile grow higher and higher is an addictive way to build your morale and keep you working hard.

IMPROVE YOUR SKILL SET → EARN AND LEARN

Whenever I'm talking about Upwork on my blog, Quora, or my YouTube videos, one of my favorite topics is "earning and learning." Stretching yourself past your limits, learning new things, and gaining new skills are the hallmarks of this platform. I'll say it again: Upwork wants EXPERTS who have a wide knowledge base, a confident style, and a range of skills that can help clients.

Upwork is such a great platform to find and keep clients. Now that I have one of the best reputations on the system, I'm constantly invited into projects with amazing and eclectic people who give me a platform to constantly build my skill set. With each newly completed project, I acquire new skills that will help me with future projects. Also, I'm able to increase my quantifiable value on the system, which makes it into such a fun game.

Earn, learn, repeat! I call this "upskilling." What I personally like to do is extend my knowledge by 10-15 percent on every project I take. In doing this, I learn new things all the time and continually challenge myself.

The work you do as an online freelancer can always be enhanced by learning new skills. This might be learning new software platforms,

various integrations of these platforms, or even new techniques in your field.

Almost everywhere you look online, you'll find a tremendous amount of resources that will help you become proficient in more things, enhancing you as a freelancer. Try the obvious examples of YouTube and Google, but don't forget to check into digital classes through affordable online course companies like Udemy.

Learn how to enhance and acquire valuable skills by going as deep as you can into any subject. This will set you apart from other free-lancers since only a few will spend time learning and combining alternate skills.

Some examples of learning you might do as a freelancer include:

- If you're a designer, you can learn how to write and edit videos.
- If you're a writer, you can learn how to write and launch email marketing campaigns.
- If you work with Shopify, take some time to learn BigCommerce and WordPress.
- If you're a virtual assistant, learn different CRM platforms that help automate businesses.

When I hire people on Upwork, I've found that many people start as VAs, writers, or designers, but then leap forward in their knowledge as they go. This allows them to significantly increase their rates.

Don't underestimate your ability to be skilled in more than one thing! When you combine skills to be more helpful to clients, your value to those clients (and your stock price/hourly rate) will skyrocket. You will also have a competitive advantage over other freelancers.

HOW TO FIND (AND KEEP) THE BEST CLIENTS

A s a freelancer on Upwork, your job is to work for clients. You do the work; they pay you. But of course, it's not as simple as that when you add actual people into the mix. On the other end of that computer connection, there is an actual human being who has expectations about what your output will look like. That person will be looking at your work and evaluating it subjectively for quality. They might be impressed. Unfortunately, sometimes they might be disappointed.

In working with clients, you need to keep in mind that old adage, "The customer is always right." Good communication is key here.

CUSTOMERS COME FIRST

If you think of yourself as a corporation, you'll be better able to remain detached and unemotional. A corporation does not have an ego, so you'll really never have a reason to get emotional about a problem with a customer. Wearing the hat of your corporation's CEO, you must always think, "What would be most advantageous for my corporation? How can I best handle this problem so that everybody wins?"

For all freelancers, issues will come up. It's inevitable. However, I find that 99.99 percent of the time, they're solvable.

When you have a problem with a customer, do your best to resolve any issues quickly. It's your job to make your customer happy. Clients hate when you let a problem linger. And the last thing you want is a resentful client—that's the surest way to lower your corporation's stock.

If you work out problems as they come up, your value as a freelancer, your "stock price," and your hourly rate will rise. Developing strong relationships with your clients is so important. You should cultivate substantial, honest communication and maintain a solid work ethic. Always putting the customer first is the optimal way to be successful as a freelancer on Upwork.

MAKE YOUR CLIENTS YOUR BEST ADVERTISERS

Your best advertisement is a job well done. When new clients analyze whether they should hire you, they will read the opinions of other people you have helped. Because of this, you should focus your marketing efforts on developing strong relationships with clients who can share their positive feedback about you. This is the path to bolstering strong job success scores and acquiring new clients.

The more positive relationships you have with clients, the less marketing you'll need to do. Why? Because your previous clients will have already done your marketing for you through their reviews.

Maintaining great relationships by doing extraordinary work is the most effective marketing plan you could have on this platform. Let your clients pass your name around. Let them rehire you since you went above and beyond your duties and blew their expectations out of the water. And let potential clients see these enthusiastic reviews. This organic approach to "selling yourself" is the ideal way to create profound sales results.

PROVE THE ROI FOR YOUR CLIENT

I've said it numerous times. If a client can see they'll make money from the hours you're working for them, they'll keep you as a freelancer for a very long time. The ultimate goal of any business is to make money.

If you can prove you're helping the company's bottom line, they'll keep on paying you. It's no different in a regular company employment scenario than it is for freelancers.

You need to prove your value.

As I mentioned, the most expensive freelancer is one that wastes a client's time. Time is money, folks. If a freelancer screws up, then the client has to go back to the drawing board to 1) undo and/or fix mistakes the freelancer made; or 2) recruit a whole different person. Having to stop to do these things means the client will lose time and money.

Money can be replaced, but if the freelancer messes up on the project or brings it backwards, a client can find themselves in a world of hurt. This is why I always emphasize proving to the client how you can maximize *their* time by spending *yours*.

LOOK FOR LONG-TERM CUSTOMERS

The ultimate client, for many reasons, is the one that keeps coming back. First of all, sourcing new work will be a breeze. Secondly, these happy clients will be easier to work with, since you'll understand how they tick. And last, Upwork loves when freelancers take on long-term clients, which causes your job success score to rise dramatically—plus it's more profitable for you. Upwork loves consistency and people who are steadily working.

HOW TO GET AMAZING REVIEWS THAT BRING YOU BUSINESS

You'll be measured as a freelancer based on certain criteria. No one wants to be defined only by numbers and statistics. However, it's just the way the modern world works. If you want to be successful at this game, you'll need to learn how to play it. Your reviews are the lead magnets that draw traffic toward your profile.

Along with the reviews, you can attach your portfolio items giving your profile an added pop.

COLLECT GREAT REVIEWS

Reviews are the first and most important thing potential clients will look at when they're considering hiring you. In today's society, we are all used to reading reviews to help influence our choices because we expect them to correlate correctly. Which movie should we watch tonight? What restaurant has the tastiest food? What do people think about a certain doctor?

Reviews can make or break any business, product, or service. On Upwork, it's no different. That's why it's imperative you do professional work, cultivate good relationships with your customers, and win those positive reviews.

Reviews are worth their weight in gold. Each five-star review proves you had a positive relationship with that client. The job ended well, and the client was happy and satisfied. What future client would not want to see that proof? That's why you must deliver outstanding work, especially at first, so you can gather as many good reviews as possible.

A new freelancer might wonder how to keep the client happy. Beyond doing their very best on a project, here are some of my tips:

- Don't take on too much, stressing yourself out, because it will be difficult to do great work.
- Maintain excellent communication with every client.
- Set yourself up for a win with each new contract.
- Be friendly with your client.
- Always finish what you started—never give up on a contract.
- Don't cop an attitude, not even in a review you leave on the system.

Getting good reviews is literally the most important thing you need to concentrate on when you're getting started with Upwork or any other digital marketplace. The social proof of reviews is crucial for selling things over the Internet. The client hasn't physically met you, so they look to others to see how things turned out with previous contracts. They likely aren't going to your website, looking at testimonials you've added there. No, they are only looking at Upwork's platform and analyzing you based on Upwork's specifications.

No one wants to be a salesperson. It's the worst part of the game. Like other online businesses, you want your customers to book you automatically through your profile. You want your profile to do the selling for you. This makes writing proposals and answering invitations so easy since you can refer them to your converting profile rather than try to sell yourself over and over… and over… again.

As a newcomer to the site, you obviously won't have any reviews. What should you do? My advice would be to take on small fixed-price gigs you know you can do very easily and very well within an hour or

two. This will help you get those first few reviews to start you off with some quantifiable results.

At the end of the day, the social proof of a ton of great reviews is really what carries you into your future success on Upwork.

If jobs are on pause, you should reach out to your client and see if they can end the contract.

In order to get a great review, I don't like to outwardly ask. I know other experts rely on a script to get them to produce a glowing review, but I like to be more natural.

Since you should already have a strong relationship with the client, simply let them know you'd love to end the contract, because having an open contract with no more work hurts your score, which is important to your freelance career. Unless the client is a prick, they'll take it upon themselves to help you out.

When you impose a scripted review, a client could feel like they're being forced. Perhaps the client didn't feel as great about the project as the contrived review portrays. They may not dig. The ultimate goal is to get rehired! I always find it better for things to happen naturally.

JOB SUCCESS SCORE EXPLAINED

Earning a lot of positive reviews will help keep your job success score high. This score is another quantitative measure clients will look at when deciding whether or not to hire you. The job success score is what Upwork bases most of its rankings around. I've mentioned job success score multiple times throughout this book, but let me explain it here a little more thoroughly.

You probably have a pretty good understanding of what the job success score is: It is essentially a number that reflects Upwork's appraisal of you as a freelancer. The score is based on client satisfaction over time. Potential clients judge your abilities based on this number. As a new freelancer, you need to complete some projects before the job success score shows up. According to Upwork, more than 90 percent of freelancers have a job success score after they have completed five projects.

But how can a freelancer impact this number? What kinds of things

should you be focused on to earn and maintain the best job success score possible?

Upwork loves long-term relationships between freelancers and their clients. Try to keep your clients coming back for more. Jobs with higher earnings will also impact your score, so look for clients who are willing to shell out more money. If you continue working for small potato jobs, Upwork won't take you seriously, and your job success score will suffer.

A score of 90 percent or above is considered excellent and will earn you the Top Rated badge, which is designated to the top ten percent of talent on the system. If your score drops to less than 75 percent, you might find it difficult to find new work on this platform.

While Upwork admits they won't reveal the exact method they use to calculate job success scores, you can rest assured a quality freelancer who does excellent work and keeps moving forward in their skills and business will be rewarded with a high score.

CLOSE OUT YOUR CONTRACTS

Once you have banged out a job, the client may want you to continue working on more things for them under the same contract. If it's a fixed project, close it out and request you start an hourly project now that there's trust. You want to make sure you lock in the review and can move on to the next project. This helps your score and lets Upwork know you're open to more work.

Always ask them to be the ones to close it out, but only if they're happy and the project is completely done. Let clients know it's helpful for you to close down projects and get a review, because Upwork dings your score for open projects aren't completed and the reviews are very helpful.

They will HAPPILY do this for you.

If the client is not happy, fix whatever lingering issue there may be and then attempt to close. Don't close it on your own and pray they respond in kind.

If you're on an hourly contract and the client wants you to work more, just keep working. You should encourage this! Upwork loves

this kind of consistency, which helps push your Job Success Score up and your costs down. If you're yearning for a review, you can actually request and ascertain one during long-term projects. This is a new great feature Upwork recently enabled.

If a client doesn't leave a review for you on their own, get in touch with them and let them know how much it affects you. Many fellow freelancers simply ignore the fact that a client has not left a review and allow the stain to settle. Sometimes busy clients will fail to get to it. Just be persistent and professional. Most of the time, you only have to ask. If you've done a good job, they're usually very happy to help you.

It's important to end contracts to get reviews, but there are exceptions. For instance, if you haven't yet completed the job successfully, don't end the contract. It baffles me why a freelancer would end an unsuccessful contract and leave a client hanging. This is the quickest way to look completely unprofessional and incompetent. And that's the road to never finding another good gig since it looks like you stalled on the job or couldn't complete the work. It makes you look like you're doing something wrong.

Try to only end contracts when things are going well, the work is done, and you can gracefully exit the relationship. As I said earlier, it should happen naturally.

CHANGE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Very rarely do clients leave bad reviews to spite you. Usually, it's a simple miscommunication that can be fixed.

Figure out why the bad or mediocre feedback was left by talking to the client. Then try to fix the issue for them. Upwork will then allow you to change feedback for these reasons, so make sure you take advantage of this part of the system, when and if you need to.

Try to avoid bad feedback at all costs!

As I mentioned above, you have to stomp this stain out from your profile, and not allow it to fester. A negative review is way worse than no review. Negative reviews create doubt and will be something you must answer for. Clients don't like the risk of hiring a freelancer who has negative reviews, since the most expensive freelancer is one who

sucks. The negative review may repel prospects from even visiting your profile, because the qualitative feedback most likely reflects quantitative measures like the JSS, which will push your profile down. Clients want ZERO drama, and they will skim over anyone who looks like an issue. Just as there is an abundance of work on this platform, there is also an abundance of freelancers. Clients have every opportunity to go with someone less risky.

Therefore, if you find that a client has left you a negative review, it would serve your interests to talk to the client, offer to fix whatever problem they were concerned about, and ask them to change their review. This will preserve your standing as a quality freelancer on the Upwork system.

SAVE THE DRAMA FOR YOUR BABY'S MAMA

If you get into a disagreement with a client, don't voice your anger in the review you leave for the client. And also reply to reviews graciously. There's no point in defending yourself other than to make yourself feel better. Overreacting draws unnecessary attention to an issue that will naturally fade away with ongoing work.

Keep all of your disgruntlement in private, and try to work things out like a grown-up.

The last thing potential clients want to see is you being a combative person who just makes excuses. Drama like this is a productivity killer that will stave off future great gigs and prevent you from working and keeping the lights on.

If you have a problem with a client, suck it up and figure out how to fix it. Don't cry over the milk spilled by the bad experience. Just try to focus on the future and how you can make this problem go away. You want to look for how this situation can become a win-win for both you and your client. Drama tactics and nursing a wounded ego have no place in a happy freelancing future.

BITE OFF ONLY WHAT YOU CAN CHEW

Be sure not to take on more than you can handle early on. If you get overwhelmed, you might find you're not able to offer your best quality work if you're stressed out.

Also, be careful not to take on jobs you don't yet have the skills for. You don't want to spend a ton of time researching and learning on fixed-price gigs that are just meant to land you great reviews. If you take too long finishing these short, fixed-price gigs, the client won't be happy. Save learning for when you're on the hourly clock.

GO OVER THE TOP TO IMPRESS THE CLIENT

If you don't yet have any reviews, or only have a couple, one way to get more very quickly is to go above and beyond what the client is asking for. So many people do only the minimum perfunctory amount and then ask for money. If you impress your clients and show them you really care about them and their needs, they will write an amazing review for you, which will only propel you into stardom.

Clients who are impressed are much more likely to hire you back, pay you more, and write you a good review.

LEAVE A KIND AND DETAILED REVIEW FOR YOUR CLIENT

It's also important to leave a review for your client. When you write these words, always be positive, even if you don't particularly love the client. Think about what the people reading your review will think. You might think trash-talking a shitty client in a review is the right thing to do, but it's not. It only makes you look huffy and annoying. The result will be no quality client in their right mind would touch you with a ten-foot pole after that. So always take the upper road.

Clients can click over to your profile from these reviews, so make sure you list out the positive, wonderful things you did during the course of this job. Go into a little detail about what you were able to accomplish. The best reviews are very specific about what exactly you did, what software you used, and other technical aspects of the project

since these keywords will show up in potential clients' searches. Tell the story of the gig.

Telling the story will really help future clients who are on the fence about hiring you get to know you better. If they feel like they know you and what kind of work you can do, they'll likely feel more comfortable hiring you.

WORK WITH OTHER FREELANCERS

I n time, you might run into some situations where you're not going to be a perfect fit for the job. Yes, you can learn more to fill in those gaps. By now, you know I'm a strong proponent of upskilling to take your freelance career to the next level. However, sometimes, you won't want or need to learn new skills to fill gaps.

Why not step onto the client side and hire another freelancer to help you get the job done? As for me, I have definitely developed a network of people who I very happily sub work to. I hire copywriters, Instagram ad people, developers, and many others to help complete the jobs I take on.

I could do it all. I just don't want to. I have learned to avoid my weaknesses and also those things I don't enjoy doing in favor of focusing on and promoting my own strengths.

THE MANY BENEFITS OF DELEGATING

When you admit you need help, amazing things can happen. First of all, you can place your focus directly on your amazing talents. This concentration on your superpower allows you to build and grow your own talent while outsourcing to other freelancers the peripheral jobs that need done.

For instance, you might be a freelancer who offers book marketing assistance to your clients. You want to build your mailing list of customers and potential customers, sending them an email newsletter every week or month that includes publishing tips and tricks. If you've ever committed to sending out a regular email newsletter, you know this can be a huge time suck. Finding topics, writing, editing, and uploading copy to email platforms, not to mention collating and maintaining a list of email subscribers, takes significant amounts of time and energy—time and energy maybe better spent focusing on your clients?

When you hire a freelancer to help you with this task, all of a sudden you are gifted with the beautiful resource of time to do the work you're best at.

Secondly, as a freelancer on Upwork, the more of a package deal you can offer clients, the better. A happy client does not have to go digging around for every little thing they need. The more pieces of the whole you can provide, the more satisfied your client will be.

For instance, let's say you offer digital marketing consulting services. You teach people how to create a marketing strategy using email, Facebook ads, SEO, landing pages, training videos, and a scheduling platform to bring new leads into their business. If you are hired to teach someone how to do this, their next inevitable question might be: "Wait, can you just do all of this for me?"

If you get a client who needs all of this done for them, all of a sudden you are faced with a variety of tasks: copywriting, video production, landing page formation, Facebook ad creation, scheduling, etc. You could do all of these things, but why would you want to? Especially since you can charge a higher rate for the entire package but then pay freelancers to do some of the more basic tasks for a much lower hourly rate. It's more efficient for you, yes. Moreover, the client is overjoyed they get a one-stop-shopping experience, with all of their needs being met in one deal and probably in a more high-quality way.

Third, hiring and working with other freelancers is a great way to have some people to talk to throughout the day. Some of us came from a typical 9-5, and while we love to crow about the many benefits of freelancing in our bunny slippers, the often unmentioned downside is

the loneliness we sometimes feel. Let's face it: we can only talk to our dog so much before we start to feel nuts. Working with other free-lancers gives us some interactions with people we might be missing.

The last benefit is you get a chance to understand the Upwork plat-form from the client's perspective. When I first came upon Upwork (then oDesk), my experience was solely in hiring freelancers to do work for my company. When I saw how the process worked—and how much those folks were getting paid to work from home, doing things they loved!—I decided to begin freelancing on Upwork myself. If you really want to understand the way the platform works from the inside out, spending some time wearing the client hat might not be a bad idea.

HIRING A FREELANCER ON UPWORK—THE BASIC PROCESS

I now have a cool little community of people I can partner with to get jobs done more efficiently. This is the basis behind Talent Bench, which is Upwork's new way of making it easy to save talent for particular tasks. Any time I want to connect with one of the hand-selected people in my squad, I simply reach out to them, asking them to jump on a gig with me, and now we are growing together. This is an excellent way to leverage your skills through other people, make your own time more efficient, and position yourself as someone who can solve even more problems for your client.

So now you know why I love partnering with other freelancers. But how do I go about getting it done?

The first step is to create a separate client profile on your Upwork account. You're actually allowed to have up to three profile types: one freelancer, unlimited client accounts, and one agency. (We'll talk more about what an agency is in the next section.)

Once you do this, it's easy to toggle back and forth between the freelancer side and the client side. When you need to hire a freelancer for any given task, you would simply switch over to the client side and craft a job posting.

Once a client works with you, they sometimes hire you again and again for different tasks. Well, it obviously will be the same for you as

a client. When you've found a freelancer who is worth keeping around, you can tap them at any time. You don't have to reinvent the wheel every time you need something accomplished. Working with the same people regularly gives you peace of mind. When you need to grind something out, you'll have a deep bench to call on.

Hiring other freelancers gives you a great sense of job security because you will be more in demand on the Upwork platform as someone who can repeatedly deliver.

Upwork lists several steps for those looking to hire freelance help:

- Define your budget.
- Create a job description.
- Find the best freelancer.
- Assess the freelancer.
- Hire the freelancer.
- Create and sign a contract.

And voilà! All of a sudden, you can delegate those tasks you don't want to do, keep your clients happy, have some friends to work with along the way, and give yourself a better understanding of the entire Upwork platform.

START AN AGENCY ON UPWORK

Beyond hiring other freelancers on an occasional basis, another possibility for more veteran Upwork freelancers is to start an agency. This might not be the best option for newbies, but you can keep this idea in the back of your mind for a bit down the road.

What does it mean to start an "agency" on Upwork? Well, basically, it means you have other freelancers working in your business—and they're able to work with your clients directly through Upwork.

Having an agency on Upwork allows you to completely scale your freelance business. With an agency, you can manage an entire team of freelancers instead of doing it all yourself. I've now been able to reach milestones I don't think I would have ever been able to achieve on my own, and I will devote an entire book on this subject next. I would caution you not to start an agency until you've been on the system for a couple years. Instead of just shooting from the hip, you will now have taken on the more serious mindset of a company owner.

As such, you will now be on an upward trajectory, empowering yourself to think and strategize like a CEO, charge company pricing, and transform your freelancing into a solid, consistent career.

Starting an agency means you can niche yourself into exactly what you will be offering potential clients. Many new freelancers simply take whatever jobs they can get. However, as an agency, you'll be the

head of an organization that has clarified its vision for the exact value you want to offer clients.

As the owner of my own agency on Upwork, I work regularly with about thirty other contractors and freelancers, all of whom I'm paying hourly. Trust me, I'm spending quite a lot of money on these folks, but it's working for me. I'm amassing a team, I have a system in place, and I'm contributing to the Upworker economy, circulating money around the globe.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN STARTING AN AGENCY ON UPWORK

Starting an Upwork agency is not for the faint of heart. If you're new to the Upwork platform, you have plenty of learning and growing to do before you should consider going this route. When you do decide an agency is the way you want to proceed, however, then there are some things to consider.

First of all, nail down what your vision is for your agency. Clients who hire agencies on this platform expect they will be working with true professionals, not dabblers. You should determine the services you'll be offering, your marketing strategy, the structure and organization of your business, and your operations strategy. If you don't have goals, you won't reach any of them.

Second, Upwork recommends you decide how you want to structure your business. Will your "employees" (i.e., fellow freelancers who you hire within the platform) work from a central co-located business location or will you be separated geographically from them? Typically, the latter means you have a business that is already running, while the former means you're starting this agency from scratch through Upwork.

Third, consider tax and legal issues. As the owner of an agency, you'll generally be more exposed legally than if you were simply a freelancer. As such, you'll need to make sure you have the appropriate level of protection so you don't get caught in a sticky legal situation in the future.

Also, you'll need to think about what kind of business entity you want to be doing business under. That is, if you reside in the US,

would it be best to be a sole proprietor, a partnership, a C-corp, an S-corp, or an LLC? When you begin an agency, it would be in your best interests to consult tax and/or legal professionals to fully understand how best to set things up.

The next thing to think about is whether you're ready to take on the $20 extra per month for your Agency Plus plan through Upwork. This is not a very exorbitant fee for someone who will be drawing in major clients as an agency owner. However, if you're still starting out and don't have a clear plan, you might find $20 to be an over-the-top fee you don't want to be paying for just yet.

Setting up your agency profile is much like setting up your free-lancer profile. This is something you should do thoughtfully. You want to clearly convey what your company does and the value it can bring to clients.

Last, you'll need to organize the roles within your agency. As in the case of a traditional company, your Upwork agency will need to have someone take care of work in the following areas: admin, finance, marketing, business development, etc. You probably can't do it all, so you may want to figure out who else can help you. Is that a freelancer you hire? Or a co-founder of your agency?

Once you get to a higher level on Upwork, starting an agency is the way to scale up your consulting business and grow your company. I like to say everyone should be their own company. This is the way of the future.

PART FOUR
COMMON UPWORK CHALLENGES (AND HOW TO GET PAST THEM)

While Upwork can be an abundant forum of great-paying work, the platform doesn't come without challenges. However, for every obstacle, there is a solution. You just have to be thoughtful and patient enough to figure that solution out. Below is advice I offer people regarding some of the most common issues they might face on this platform.

DIFFICULTY GETTING APPROVED

As we know, freelancing has never been more popular. The new gig economy has grown to a whopping 59 million freelancers in 2020, according to Adam Ozimek at Upwork, with an upward trend predicted by most sources. With such a growing influx of freelancers to their system, Upwork has had to tighten the supply, which means not every freelancer's profile gets accepted.

Since so many people are turning to freelance work for their livelihood, Upwork has had to toughen up its requirements and allow only the *most expert* people into the fold.

The good news about this is Upwork remains a legitimate place for *real* professionals to find *real* work for *real* money. It's not just some chintzy hack site with pitiful standards. You can be proud to be a part of the largest freelancing site in the world, which connects more than 12 million freelancers with about five million clients.

Even five years ago, Upwork was different. They let everybody, from all corners of the world, get on there. Now, however, with over 10,000 new sign-ups a day, they only want the most highly skilled experts who have a proven track record of success. These are the freelancers who have the biggest chances of making deals with clients. They demand excellence.

Why do they demand excellence? Well, each time a freelancer sells

a client freelance services, Upwork makes money. It's all about making money. That's why they're in business. They're not trying to save humanity. They're not trying to free Willy or give shoes to homeless kids. Okay, so I hope they maybe do some of these things too with part of their profits, but at the core of their business, they want freelancers who make money for their clients, secure long-term contracts, and earn a steady amount of income.

I have several tips for how to be sure to get your profile approved on this system. The first step is easy:

BE AN EXPERT

At the end of the day, Upwork is a business and wants to make money. They want to ensure their clients are getting the greatest return on their investment (ROI) as possible. Because happy clients = returning clients = more money for Upwork.

In the old days, before freelancing began to boom, Upwork used to feature a lot of low-skilled labor in areas like data entry, research, basic site change work, graphic design, and simple content creation. Now you can still get jobs in these areas on the platform, but the competition is fierce since these skills are not very high level. With 10,000 applicants a day, the people who are going to find success are the ones who can go above and beyond these elementary tasks.

Eventually, you want to notch your skills up to an area of expertise that is not oversaturated.

If you're not an expert in much of anything yet, that's no problem. Start small. Figure out what skills you can leverage to get on the site, become approved, and begin earning money. That's the first hurdle. After that, you can keep adding to your skill set, learning everything you can, and increasing your value and hourly wage project by project. Everyone has expertise in something, even if it's just answering emails or transcribing documents. Find something to get started and go from there.

Within a short time, however, you're going to want to take these low-earning jobs up a notch and keep raising your level of expertise.

Otherwise, you'll face too much competition and find it harder to get to that six-figure mark.

LEARN EVERYTHING YOU CAN

On your path to expertise, you might need to do some work off the books to practice your skills. Working on your own projects or doing pro-bono work for a nonprofit or small business can be great ways to learn and develop skills. You might pitch doing some copywriting for a small business or offer to proofread their marketing materials. You could write grants for a nonprofit that has little to no budget. All of this work, while unpaid, will help you build skills and wisdom.

All of that practice will help you land better quality, higher-paying gigs on Upwork.

In addition to practicing your marketable skills on a volunteer basis, you can learn an extraordinary amount of skills online. We talked about this before, but it bears mentioning again since self-learning is so important in today's world.

Videos, blogs, and online courses abound that teach you how to use different types of software, how to perform various writing functions for a company, or how to integrate different platforms. Nine times out of ten, someone else has already conquered the mountain you're standing at the bottom of and is now willing to be a mentor. The Internet is teeming with information. A person can find anything they want to learn about online.

Another way you can learn on the job is to begin work on Upwork as a freelancer for an agency, which will help you build your experience and skills as a newcomer to the site. Typically, the client will pay the agency and not each individual freelancer, which gives you a little more leeway since an agency is more likely to take a chance on a rookie than a business client would be.

Keep in mind you can't learn everything at once. Take it in slow, incremental bites. Eventually, you'll begin to pick up new skills that connect with other skills, forming you into a freelancer who will be sought after by clients. Clients love to hire one-stop-shop freelancers who can wear a lot of hats.

Sell three ways: to yourself, to Upwork, and to the client

When you're trying to get your profile approved by Upwork, you have to go in with the right attitude. People are getting denied more than ever, but that does not mean you won't get accepted. There is one key thing you need to do first: BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.

If you don't believe in yourself, if you don't think you're an expert who knows what they're talking about, no one else will either. So the first thing to do is to sell YOU to yourself.

It all begins with you. I'm not saying you need to be cocky. Nah, in fact, as I say time and time again, you actually need to remove your ego helmet and be humble on this journey. However, don't be mealy-mouthed about the skills you're gaining. Be proud and confident, and don't be afraid to stand up for yourself with spirit and certainty.

Please understand it won't happen in an instant. You're not just going to wake up one morning and realize the Confidence Fairy visited you in the middle of the night. It takes time—and experience. But it will come. With time, you'll feel better and better about your skills.

The next step, after bolstering your morale, is to convince Upwork you are worthy of being on their system. Since it's so competitive these days, getting approved can be a pretty crazy process, so you will have to really focus on selling yourself as an expert.

In everything you say in your bio, you'll need to prove to Upwork you are trustworthy and competent. You want them to see you have a self-assured, professional attitude since it hints you'll be able to sell yourself to clients.

(Remember the whole premise… the more clients YOU sell, the more money Upwork makes.)

Upwork absolutely does not want people who 1) will bail, or 2) won't take freelancing seriously. Their approval process was designed to protect their clients from expensive mistakes that will cost time and money. They promise their clients the Upwork system is a robust one that finds TRUE TALENT for them, not a bunch of nitwits that will walk away from the job or flub everything up. Upwork knows wasted time is expensive for their clients, and that's why they do everything they can to try to prevent bad freelance experiences in the first place.

Thus, if it's difficult to gain self-confidence in your skills and abili-

ties, it's even harder to sell yourself to Upwork. However, if it's challenging to get approved by Upwork, it's 100X harder to sell yourself to the clients! I'm not trying to scare you off, but you need to understand how important it is you sell, sell, sell, every minute you're on this platform.

No one is going to hand you your success. A hundred grand is not going to show up, hovering before you in mid-air on a silver platter. You're going to have to persevere. You're going to have to be smart, work hard, and learn everything you can. And you're going to have to trust you can do it.

MAKE YOUR BIO AMAZING

In addition to starting with a poised attitude, the other main thing to do is to rock your bio. This snapshot of you on the system must thoroughly convince Upwork and potential clients you will do what you say you're going to do. You can do this through strong, action-packed language, incredible testimonials, a professional photo of yourself, a strong portfolio full of relevant, excellent work, and a video.

We talked about it earlier, but I want to reiterate that the video is, hands-down, one of the most effective ways to sell yourself on Upwork. I believe this is the best way to connect with people. Think about it: You're a stranger to these potential clients. But after they see you talking on your video, you don't seem quite so unfamiliar. A video warms the client up to you—it's like a first date. It helps them understand you a little better, see you care, and trust you.

It is indeed more difficult to get approved on Upwork than it once was. However, if you work hard to become an expert, sell yourself, learn everything you can, and put honest effort into creating an excellent profile, you'll get approved by the system and soon have clients coming to you like a magnet.

INABILITY TO FIND CLIENTS WITH BIG BUGETS

I hear this complaint from Upwork beginners all the time. *Clients don't pay enough. Clients don't have very big budgets. I can't find clients who have money to spend. Are you kidding me? A fixed-price of $150 to edit a 150,000-word manuscript? They may as well call this a VOLUNTEER job!*

This isn't true at all. With over five million clients on the system at any given time, you'll find a huge variety of people looking for quality freelancers. Budgets will be all over the board. For the most part, the clients you'll find on Upwork will be serious businesses and individuals who are intent on finding help. They will not be tire-kickers who have no intention of hiring or aren't willing to shell out some real dough.

Even though many people assume Upwork's clients are looking for the cheapest solution possible, that's really not the case. I suppose you'll bump into these kinds of people anywhere you go, but for the most part, the clients who frequent this system are quality clients looking for quality workers.

The key here is to choose the right clients for you. Once you've conducted your search, adding your hourly rate into the search parameters, then take a look at the job postings that come up. As I've said

before, if a job and/or client does not appeal to you—for whatever reason—listen to your instincts and move on. Don't waste your time.

PROVE THE CLIENT'S ROI

In the online business world, any client is looking at one thing and one thing alone: a return on investment (ROI). Trust me, I know this since I've worked with a couple hundred clients on this platform myself and also run my own agency. As a client, I'd be happy to spend $1,000 if I know I can earn $1,001 from that investment. If I can justify that a return is coming back to me, I'll spend whatever it takes.

This means YOUR job is to justify how you get that money back to the client. If you can confidently say, "Hey, if you spend this amount of money on me, you're going to get that amount back and then some," the client will be happy to hire you. You just have to prove their ROI.

THINK "RELATIONSHIP," NOT "ONE-TIME GIG"

Also, you have to remember that a lot of times you'll be able to get ongoing work from a client. At first, you might only get $50 or $100 for a task, but then after you deliver the work with flying colors, they'll hire you again and again. Don't think of your Upwork freelancing as small-batch, finite jobs. Think of it as relationship-building.

The good thing about working with repeat clients is they will eventually start coming to you, asking if you'd be willing to take on another project. This saves you all the time of writing proposals since new work will just magically begin showing up in your inbox.

As your work with a client builds, you'll be able to get more reviews and more time logged on Upwork, which positively affects the system's algorithms, prompting your name to show up higher in future clients' searches. Also, your job success score will rise, you'll be able to increase your hourly rate, and new work will always be available.

So don't worry if you have to suck wind as a newcomer for a little while. Stay persistent and keep doing good work and, eventually,

you'll be earning very well from clients who have bucketfuls of money to spend.

KEEP BUILDING YOUR EXPERTISE

Upwork loves experts. Their system is built around good quality freelancers who can offer clients the best experiences possible. In light of that knowledge, the very best thing you can do as a freelancer is to keep working toward a higher level of expertise. The more expertise you have, the higher your income will be.

Many freelancers get onto the platform with extensive knowledge about a particular field already. Maybe you have a background in programming, marketing, or accounting. These are high-level skills clients will pay handsomely for.

Many other would-be freelancers, however, don't come to the platform with high-level skills already on their resumes. That's okay, though. Everyone needs to start somewhere. All you have to do is get approved on the system and start working at whatever jobs you are comfortable doing. After a little time, broaden your skill set and add another type of job to your list of capabilities.

I can't say it enough: Learn. Everything. You. Can. If you truly want to get to the six-figure mark on Upwork, you have to keep pushing yourself to learn more and more. Every day, add something new to your plate. Trust me, with the right attitude, you'll be able to reach your financial goals on Upwork, just as I did.

UPWORK TAKES A PERCENTAGE OF WHAT YOU MAKE

Upwork's fee structure seems to be one of the biggest complaints I hear from people about the system. Yes, Upwork takes their cut of every gig, at a rate that ranges from 5-20 percent. As someone who has earned more than a million dollars on Upwork, however, I couldn't care less about the fees. In fact, I EMBRACE these fees. Upwork found me the client; I don't mind giving them their due. Without Upwork, I would have to work long and hard to find that client in the first place.

How much would you pay a job recruiter to find a job for you? Probably 15 percent? The way I look at it is this: Upwork facilitates your deal to begin with, so they are entitled to a finder's fee.

Just to remind you what the fee structure is: Typically, Upwork takes 20 percent of the first $500 you bill a new client. If you work longer for the same client, then they only take ten percent of your earnings between $500.01 and $10,000. After you earn more than $10,000, they only take five percent.

One way to minimize the fee you pay to Upwork is to work for long-term clients on one single contract. If you continue on with the same client, once you start earning over $10k, you'll be paying the lowest percentage possible. Steady work is great on a variety of levels,

but this is one more plus for keeping your clients happy and coming back.

Another tip for minimizing the pain of having to pay Upwork a commission is this: Simply incorporate the fee into your hourly rate, charging the client a little more. This way, Upwork gets paid, while you still earn the rate you wanted to earn. If you're looking at a ten percent fee, then just add ten percent to the hourly you normally would charge. If you're in the 20 percent bucket, then simply add 20 percent. Most clients are happy to pay a little more, especially if they're getting their desired ROI.

I honestly don't know why people get so weird about having to pay Upwork a commission. Without this platform, they'd have a tough time finding this many clients this easily, all in the same place.

SLOW WEEKS, THEN CRAZY WEEKS

Anyone who has freelanced in any field knows gig work can be a feast or famine. For weeks, you could be working 12-hour days, trying to keep up with all the clients coming out of the woodwork. But then you'll have weeks of deathly stillness where you wonder if your laptop has some tech issue that isn't allowing your proposals to go out. Has Upwork erased you? Tapping the figurative microphone, you yell, *Is this thing ON?*

This cycle of mind-bending, bleary-eyed work and do-nothing, languid despondency can be awful for freelancers. It's pretty hard to focus on the creative work that freelancing often is when you're worried about the ups and downs of your income. Even though a little feast and famine is inevitable, I have some tips for minimizing the extreme effects of it.

HOURS ARE YOUR KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

When you're working hourly, you'll be paid consistently every week on Friday or Wednesday, depending on if you're an agency or a freelancer.

If you hit your target hours every week, you'll have a consistent income rolling in every week, so it's not all over the place. You can

better prepare and predict your income if you set up the contracts in the way we went over.

MARKET STEADILY

Many Upwork freelancers like to send out as many proposals as humanly possible, every time they sit down at their computer. It's like an addiction or playing the lottery, where you throw your hat in the ring for anything and everything you could possibly have a chance at. Over-marketing can become problematic for a couple of reasons. First, if you spend too much time marketing, you're wasting precious hours you could be earning hourly. Second, if you actually got offers on all of these jobs, you likely wouldn't have time to carry them all out—at least not well.

Other freelancers don't take much time for marketing at all. They work on the job in front of them. Then, when that gig is up, they look up with wide eyes and mutter, "Crap, NOW what am I gonna do?" This isn't a good approach either, since you'll have to go through a dry spell while you're waiting for an offer from the next client.

My advice is to market steadily. Even while you're working on a few jobs, submit proposals for a few more. That way, you'll have new jobs in the hopper waiting for your attention.

Once you become more experienced and confident in your abilities, you could even line jobs up, asking potential clients if they would mind waiting X number of days (or weeks) to get started on the project. Depending on what the work is, this may be a very good solution, if the client is game. You could even offer to start on something small for the client, so the client can test you out, so to speak, before they agree to wait for you to do the bigger job. When your schedule opens up, you can get to the job they were advertising for in the first place.

SET ASIDE SOME SAVINGS

Saving money for a rainy day is another way to make sure your earnings consistently take care of your living expenses, even if the river of

work dries up once in a while. Really, no matter how you work, it's not a bad idea to have some money set aside for a time you might need it.

If you work at a regular, full-time job, the one thing you'll be assured of is you'll probably earn a steady paycheck each and every month. That's the *only* good thing, in my opinion, since you know I'm all about freelancing instead of working for the Man.

This false sense of security can change quickly like we've seen with me and millions of others during the time of the pandemic. Is paycheck to paycheck really more secure these days? Or are your skills more secure?

Working as a freelancer has incredible benefits. You have flexibility, the ability to choose your own hours and projects, and an unparalleled chance to grow that is only limited by your own imagination. But—why is there so often a "but"?—the ebb and flow of available work and income can trip up a freelancer who isn't prepared for it.

The fix for this is obvious… just prepare for unforeseeable shifts in income by setting aside some money that will help pay for future expenses, even if your day-to-day earnings dry up.

Also, set a budget that, while allowing for a good lifestyle, is also practical and helps you stay within your means. No well-prepared freelancer should be getting tripped up by the feast and famine cycle. Definitely don't even consider using credit cards to pay for things like groceries. That's a bad solution to an already bad situation. (Unless you're just using the credit cards for points. Then that's a completely different story.)

At the end of the day, you won't be able to completely control the mountains and valleys of workload. But you can do your best to manage them with some thoughtful planning.

GETTING BOOTED FROM THE SITE

Yes, it happens. Sometimes, freelancers (or clients) break the rules, don't abide by Upwork's Terms of Service, and get kicked off the site. This is almost always because people are being shady. Getting booted from Upwork is something freelancers often face, but it's totally avoidable. Upwork is your friend and guardian, so treat them accordingly. If you do that, you shouldn't have anything to worry about.

If you're not sure what the Terms of Service say, it is a good idea to at least skim these rules so you kind of have an understanding. The Terms of Service, or TOS as it's commonly called, is the legal document that spells out in great detail what Upwork expects from both its freelancers and its clients. This lengthy contract is full of legalese and takes some time to read thoroughly. If you don't have time for all of it, at least take a look at the major points.

DON'T CUT UPWORK OUT OF THE DEAL

First and foremost, please don't try to circumvent the system to save the fees. It happens more often than you would think. The freelancer finds the client on Upwork but then is unwilling to give Upwork their fair percentage.

This would be like hiring a real estate agent to sell your house. The agent markets it, holds open houses, and tirelessly shows your home to all interested parties. Finally, they find you a buyer! But, at the very last minute, you decide you don't feel like paying the agent their commission, so you arrange to meet the buyer separately to sign the contract and close the deal.

This is not only unethical, but it's illegal. You would be breaking the contract you signed with your real estate agent. It would be the same on Upwork. Upwork's policy is you may not take a client off the system unless you have worked for at least two years for that client or pay an opt-out fee.

Long story short, even if you're tempted to take the job off the platform, don't do it. They'll kick you off the site so fast you won't even know what happened. Dodgy, back alley Facebook groups and weird corners of the Internet are plagued by losers trying to get back onto the system, because they refused to play ball and got booted. If you ever want to work on Upwork again, it's a bad idea to start working for the client on your own, bypassing Upwork's fees. Yes, you'll save yourself 5-20 percent commission—but you'll lose tons of future clients Upwork would have probably brought to the table. It's a short-sighted bit of insanity to try to cut Upwork out of the deal.

DON'T COMMUNICATE OUTSIDE OF UPWORK BEFORE THE CONTRACT STARTS

If you meet a client on Upwork, ALL pre-contract communication with the client needs to stay within the Upwork platform. This may seem a little harsh, but it makes sense. Between their new messaging platform, and the ability to use Zoom, it's just as easy as anything else available.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander. Leverage the tools Upwork has so they can make them better. Before the messaging rule, suspect clients had a habit of pulling freelancers off the platform, leaving them in a vulnerable position. These types of clients were usually shady and weren't someone you wanted to work with. Keeping the convos on Upwork does a good job of scaring those types away that make it a habit of taking advantage of people.

You can share the room and invite whomever you want just like

any other Zoom meeting. And the chat acts like any other messaging app you've ever used. I like to have the app loaded on my phone, iPad, and MacBook, so I can always see notifications.

It becomes very easy to forget who set you up in the first place if you have your first chat with the client via phone or email. You want to stay organized.

Taking convos off the platform is just not worth the risk. The fix is simple! Keep your pre-contract communication with the client via the messages or video option in Upwork's messaging system.

Once you have the contract in place, it's okay to communicate however you need to, sharing contact info or websites necessary to complete the job. It's better to use Upwork if there is any issue, but for practical purposes, it makes sense to use the tools you need to work together—once there is a contract.

DON'T MISBEHAVE WITH CLIENTS

Upwork wants everyone to be satisfied. They want to facilitate successful deals between freelancers and clients. That's the path of least resistance for them, and that's the way they get paid. When they see any kind of misbehavior on the part of a freelancer, they won't be happy. And you won't find yourself a part of the system for very much longer.

Therefore, please treat your clients with respect and kindness. You should not enter into any client agreement with arrogance, hostility, or anger. If you aren't the type of person to deal fairly with every person you meet, even in the face of a dispute, then Upwork might not be your thing.

As a freelancer who agrees to abide by Upwork's Terms of Service, you will be expected to keep your composure at all times. Even if you're mad. Even if the client seems to be stiffing you out of payment. And even if they aren't respecting your feelings.

Hey, we're dealing with people here, right? Any time you deal with people, things are bound to get messy. I'm not saying you won't have some issues to deal with. I AM saying you shouldn't deal with them in a mean, nasty way. And you also shouldn't ignore the client, leaving

them hanging in the middle of a job. Upwork has dispute resolution services that you can contact if you have a problem with payment, harsh communication, or fraudulent/suspicious activity on the part of the client.

Don't try to go it alone. Don't get emotional. Don't play the blame game. And don't get sucked into the drama. Holding on to a healthy sense of karma can be helpful—what you dish out is what you surely will receive back. If you have a problem with a client, remain professional, and get Upwork to help. Otherwise, you'll be seen as a squeaky wheel, and you will get booted from the system.

DON'T DO INFERIOR WORK

At the same time, Upwork is watching your feedback. They don't want freelancers who deliver shoddy work to the clients. No, they want only true experts who act professionally and provide excellent work. The freelancer who has a bunch of two-star reviews will not be viewed as an excellent worker. That's grounds for getting kicked off the site.

The phrase, "The customer is always right," has never rung so true as it does on Upwork. If you have a string of negative feedback comments or clients have filed disputes or complaints about your low-quality work, it won't take long before Upwork invites you out of their freelance marketplace. With over 18 million registered users, they don't have time for losers who refuse to deliver first-rate results.

My advice is to keep your word. Always do what you promise the client you will do. If you don't know how to complete a task, be open-minded about learning new things. And never give up. You'd be surprised how many freelancers just bail out mid-way into a job.

DIFFICULT CLIENTS CAN BE TOO MUCH TO TAKE

N ot all clients are perfect. I've definitely run into a few sticky situations with clients I knew were not going to end well, despite my best ability to mediate. Sometimes mediation must turn to mitigation, and you must protect yourself from fallout. The last thing you want is for the issue to impact other areas of your business.

When you have an issue, sometimes you just have to pay and take the loss. Loss of money from one project is a drop in the bucket to the wealth you can generate through Upwork over the long term. Don't let pride prevent you from making this important move when all else fails.

Bad reviews can cripple you. And while it's an unfair relationship, this is just the way it is. You can either spend months of your time preparing a defamation of character lawsuit or weeks trying to convince Upwork to do something. Or you can spend the energy making yourself a better freelancer. Just remember, the clients are the ones paying the money and keeping this whole thing alive. Do your best to always see the project from their point of view. The ultimate goal is to never ever get a junk review. Do everything in your power to please the client so that doesn't happen. Yes, even refund an unhappy client, if you must. If you wind up getting a bad review after you do

everything you can, there are some things you can do—but, really, you should never let it get to this point.

Most of these issues you run into with clients aren't personal. They are 99% solvable, and it's almost always about "money" or "time" and thus can be solved with "money" or "time." Since they're the same thing on the Upwork system, you can basically solve all of your problems, if you're willing to take the time to figure it out. This is crippling for some freelancers, and they absolutely don't want to do it. You usually come across them on some bitter blog they wrote years later about how Upwork doesn't work, and it's because they are dwelling on this one event.

Despite the turbulent tales some freelancers tell, I don't think it's all that difficult to make the client happy. What follows are my tips for getting along with the most important person in this whole process: your client.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

As I mentioned earlier, nine times out of ten, a problem with a client happens because of a communication error (usually regarding money). Typically, the client's biggest concern is that they get what they paid for. They'll want to make sure they receive what you promised to deliver at the time you told them. When those things don't happen, they'll be pissed.

The best way to fix things is to get to the bottom of it. What exactly is the client not happy with? Do they think you're not doing good work? Do you think you're doing good work? Are you charging too much for what you did? Are you taking too long? Listen to their side of the story with empathy and concern.

The next thing you need to do might be difficult. As freelancers, we sometimes feel precarious, as though the client holds all the cards and we don't have any power at all. But you do have power. Your power lies in taking the higher road and solving problems in ways that will serve you and your business.

In the face of a problem, you just need to stand up tall, set your ego aside, and work out the issue so the situation becomes a win-win for

both of you. This is the way to a good review, which will only help your business thrive with more clients and more income.

THINK OF IT AS A LONG GAME

When you have issues with difficult clients, you need to step back and look at the larger picture. Your freelance career is a long game you're playing, not a short one. Arguing over pennies and tiny grievances is an exercise in futility. Sometimes the smallest irritations can seem very big in the moment, but they're literally nothing to you a year later. So why not realize that now, and simply fix the problems as they arise, without emotion, without ego, and with as little pain as possible?

If the problem is money-related, figure out a way to get some of their money back to them. If they think you aren't working fast enough, try to set a schedule of deadlines, so they know you're doing your very best to meet their requirements. If they don't like the work you're doing, ask them how you can improve. The very best thing you can do is to always take responsibility for your own behavior.

Clients want to solve the problem—they don't want to have issues any more than you do. On Upwork, very few clients are crazy sociopaths who want to hurt you. On the contrary, it's just the opposite. Most clients want to help you and support you in your freelance endeavor as much as they can.

If you're able to get to the heart of the matter and solve it, you'll get past the issue and your client will respect you more. Building a good relationship with someone can reap rewards in the future since it helps you build a solid reputation.

Reputation management is an important job in the freelancing world since your reputation is gold. You want to appease your clients because they'll go out of their way to write you a review and even hire you again so long as you don't spoil the relationship. There's no upside in ever trying to prove you're right to a client if they're not happy. If they don't agree with you, well, that's their perspective. You're better off spending your efforts finding a resolution. Clients love freelancers who respond to issues that arise and actually listen. What they *don't* love are freelancers who argue for five hours about being right.

In the long game, your goal should always be to make your clients happy. That's why you're in this biz—to make your clients happy! If that's not your goal and you're only in it to earn as much money as humanly possible, then, I'm sorry to say, you're not going to last on this platform.

Trust me, I've had my share of bad situations with clients in the past. I've really had to bite my tongue a number of times. But, hey, it's just business. If you end up with a toxic situation (as we all do at some points in our careers), then leave your ego at the door and fix it. And then move on.

HOW TO HANDLE 'ASKHOLES'

As I close out the section on dealing with difficult clients, I wanted to share the story of when I had to deal with an 'askhole.'

If you're not familiar with the term, an 'askhole' is someone who constantly keeps asking for things beyond the scope of a project. Taking this one step further, I see an askhole as someone who always wants free coaching, consulting, and advice but isn't willing to pay very much for it. An askhole is kind of a self-absorbed tool, someone who demands special attention but doesn't even give you the courtesy of using what you have to offer them.

This happened to me. And, shockingly enough, the biggest askhole I've ever worked with is very well-known... and actually kind of one of my idols.

This guy, who was one of the smartest experts I'd ever heard of, gave a presentation on the topic of marketing at the Traffic and Conversions (T&C) Convention in San Diego, which was held every year (until COVID-19). For digital marketers, this convention was the crème de la crème of marketing events. Even though the T&C is a little pricey, the thousands of dollars I have spent for tickets, food, and travel have come back to me tenfold every time I've attended.

Shortly after this convention, my freelance career in digital marketing consulting really began to take off. A year into using the Upwork platform, I was finding I could monetize my skills online. I

was crushing it by then and had no problem getting new clients regularly. I was definitely cooking with gas!

Shortly after the conference, I was at home taking care of some chores around the house. I was excited since my then-girlfriend (now my son's mother) was coming to visit from Belgium. I remember I was rushing around nervously, cleaning and getting ready for her arrival. Vacuum cleaner in one hand, I pulled my phone out of my pocket with my other when I heard a notification ding. Glancing at it, I wasn't surprised when I saw it was a notification from Upwork, a client looking for help on a project.

Typically, when I got messaged on Upwork, I would prioritize getting right back to the client to get them on a call. Back in those days, before Upwork wanted all communication to go through their system, it wasn't against the Terms of Service to arrange the first call through Skype, so that's what I did with this particular client—we'll just call him "Jeff"—who seemed like the real deal.

Once I got on the Skype call with Jeff, I was blown away when I heard who his partner was. It was the expert I'd heard speak at the T&C convention! I was pumped at the idea that I had been effectively learning from this digital marketing wizard since I'd first heard about him, and now he and his partner, *Jeff*, wanted to hire ME as a digital marketing consultant!

What a weird turn of events!

I eagerly took on the project, which was to build an evergreen webinar funnel. For those readers who might not know, "evergreen" means something that can live on its own, without much human involvement, once it's built. These evergreen marketing systems are great for selling products or services 24/7—obviously, clients love the idea.

This particular freelance job Jeff had offered me was bringing me full circle. My career was taking off to the point that my own heroes were now hiring ME to help them with their digital marketing projects. I experienced a beautiful feeling of peace and joy… for about ten minutes.

That's when I realized my new client, the beloved digital marketing

speaker from whom I'd learned so much, turned out to be… you guessed it… an ASKHOLE.

As the work got started, I quickly became this client's freelance punching bag, having to do whatever urgent task was needed. And the urgent task changed just about every time the guy changed his designer underwear.

Skype calls here, Slack calls there. Emails coming out of my ears. The job quickly became overwhelming. I was getting texts in the middle of the night and Facetimed in the morning asking me why I didn't respond to the texts he just sent. Then I'd get messages on Upwork wondering why I was charging for working for my time.

I nearly went insane, because it was difficult to concentrate on any of my other clients. He became a vampire of my time.

Finally, it got to be too much. Essentially, this client wanted a full-time person, but seemed to have little interest in paying me or respecting my time. Even though it was nice to be a part of his organization, what was my time and freedom worth? That's what I had already learned to love about freelancing… I owned my own schedule. I called no one but myself "boss."

The take-home here is you have to be cautious when you're matching yourself up to a client. Be careful your new client won't ask so much you feel like you're losing your marbles. Unfortunately, the match I made with this client was not a good one. I knew early on, but I ignored my gut because he was someone I looked up to as a marketing mentor. It was a mistake. Stick with the plan, and just work with people that flow naturally with the company you're running and the life you're living.

Despite my best intentions to make this project work, the contract wound up ending badly. He eventually fired me for spelling something wrong in an email I didn't write. At this point in my career, I was unfazed by someone not wanting me. I knew my skills outshined the shade he threw, which was reinforced by the dozens of clients that were happily paying for my work and talking about it. The guy was a nightmare and too inept to realize he blamed me for something I had no hand in.

I wasn't going to defend myself. I was going to thank him and

move on. Buttressed by my bank account, I sure as shit wasn't going to need unemployment, and I knew I had all the tools to repair my marred mission.

Even though it didn't work out, what this client proved to me was the top people in the world were using Upwork. Knowing this, I was going to hustle harder and hit the gas even further. I knew it was also time to buy stock in this company, because it became clear this way of working was going to last forever.

But as for "askholes," the best time to handle a problem client is before the contract is made. Lesson learned. Don't take a contract you don't feel comfortable with.

Unfortunately, sometimes you don't realize it is going to be a problem client until you're already in the middle of the job. You'll have to mitigate damage and draw boundaries where you need to. Be honest upfront regarding what you can do for the money you're being paid. In the case of this "askhole," I found that both the scope of work and the responsibility increased dramatically, even though he seemed to have very little interest in paying my rate.

The best way to handle "Askholes" and other troublesome clients is to check your emotions at the door. If you find yourself in a sticky situation with a client, it's best to keep your ego under wraps and try to communicate with them in the best way you can. It's not easy, but you need to deal with your business pursuits objectively. Otherwise, you'll get nasty reviews, your job success score will plummet, and you won't find the success on Upwork you've worked so hard to achieve.

UPWORK SCAMS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

Sometimes people will ask me about scams they should watch out for on Upwork. Overall, I believe Upwork is a safe place to do business. If it wasn't, Upwork wouldn't be in existence. Nor would it be the world's number one go-to for freelancing. For every scammer, there are hundreds of thousands of dedicated, authentic freelancers and clients in this space.

There are all kinds of people on this platform. Most Upwork users are absolutely harmless and want nothing more than to find work or workers. However, a tiny minority of Upwork clients and freelancers are scammers. This means you should beware and watch your back. If you see people like this, just ignore them.

The biggest scams, according to the Upwork website, is when clients or freelancers: 1) ask you to pay money to get the job, 2) try to blackmail you for good feedback, 3) offer to pay you directly outside of the Upwork finance system, or 4) ask you to contact them (or vice-versa) outside of Upwork.

One scam you should definitely watch out for is when a client will ask multiple freelancers to do a free trial job or test before they decide on who to hire. You should never consider working for free. If a client asks you to do this, this isn't a real client. Clearly, they are just trying to get free labor.

I've gotten weird phone calls, emails, and LinkedIn messages about Upwork matters. It's totally shady if someone contacts you from anywhere but the Upwork platform. It could be these folks were kicked off Upwork and were contacting me like this to circumvent the platform.

You should also beware of a client that tries to get your money, your info, or your labor for free. Don't give out any information Upwork didn't ask you for. Don't work for free. Don't pay to work. And don't go off the system. If you follow all of those guidelines, you should be safe.

Also, pay attention to reviews. As a freelancer, you can check out a potential client before you begin to work for them. Look at the reviews freelancers have left for them. Does it seem like they'd be easy to work with? Did they give clear directions about the work they need? Also, look at the reviews these clients have left for freelancers. Did they seem snarky? Did they consistently leave nasty comments about their freelancers?

If a client seems like they would be hard to work with, this doesn't necessarily mean they're scammers, but you never know. It should be a warning bell. When you have so many clients to choose from, it's probably best to avoid powder kegs like this.

If you do run into a dubious situation that seems like a scam, don't go it alone. It's pretty easy to report scams to Upwork. This kind of underhanded behavior is obviously bad for their business, so they will kick unsavory characters off their platform.

Even though I've heard freelancers bitch about the Terms of Service, these legal guidelines are put in place partly to protect users on the system. Upwork asks that you not talk off the system until contracts are started and a payment method is determined. They also ask that all payments be made through Upwork. As long as you communicate, pay, and get paid through the system, you don't have to worry about some of the problems that might arise if you do it alone.

Even though scammers on Upwork aren't common, they do exist, and you should take caution if something seems fishy to you. Don't believe anything that seems too good to be true.

AFTERWORD

When I first started working on Upwork, I had no idea how well it would turn out for me. I started with a $45 gig and am now commanding $500-750/hour. I'm completely out of debt, I work wherever and whenever I want, and I take on only those jobs that light me up.

More valuable than the money I earn is the wealth of knowledge and confidence I've been able to accumulate over the years by being able to quantify my talents and help an eclectic array of clients.

I've been able to travel the world as I took on clients, working from literally anywhere that had Internet, spending tons of quality time with my son, my girlfriend, and my dog, Puffin. Screw working from home—how about working from Rome?

From my humble beginnings, I can now say I have worked with hundreds of clients, earned over one million dollars, and achieved the Expert Vetted badge, which means I'm among the top one percent of experts in my field on Upwork's platform. I'm totally stoked about that!

What kind of job would or could ever provide someone with this kind of freedom? I am so totally grateful for the success I found on Upwork, and I truly believe this platform changed my life. Because of this, I was anxious to share my knowledge with other people who

might be feeling the same way I once was: determined to make a move that would totally change their life. And maybe even save it!

I hope this book helped you develop an action plan for not only getting started on Upwork but also creating the mindset for moving toward a six-figure freelancing income. My goal in writing it was to motivate you to reshape your life and realize substantial earnings by taking advantage of Upwork. I look forward to seeing you on the world's largest work marketplace!

A NOTE TO THE READER

Thank you so much for reading my book, *Upwork Saved My Life!*

It took nearly going bankrupt to figure out that I could start generating a consistent six-figure income from anywhere in the world by freelancing on Upwork.

After five years of freelancing and millions generated from the system, I'm confident the world's work marketplace is here to stay.

Whether you're just starting out on Upwork or are familiar with the system, this book is a guide to helping you achieve great success and earn a solid income for you and your family.

Thank you once again,
    Adam

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Palmer is a top-rated marketing expert who has helped thousands of people on Upwork successfully grow their businesses.

This has transformed him into one of the highest earners on the platform, out of millions of freelancers. He has also trained thousands of people about how to freelance online so they too can become financially free.

You can learn more about Adam and his work at Upworksaved-mylife.com

Upwork Saved My Life

How To Create A
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