

The Complete Freelancer Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Working as a freelancer gives you a major knowledge base to later on build your own business career, although, like everything else, in the beginning as you have little experience you will face lots of obstacles. You always have to remember that in order to succeed you will have to surpass all those obstacles.

I myself begun as a freelancer and faced some of those difficulties firsthand, but I overcame most of them and that experience led me to my current big project (which some of you may already know): www.onclickacademy.com. In this guide I'll try to share with all of you what I've learned so far as a freelancer.

WHAT IS FREELANCING?

If you search the dictionary, freelancing is defined as either “A person who sells services to employers without a long-term commitment to any of them” or it can also be “A medieval mercenary”... well... we’ll ignore the mercenary definition and stick to the first one!

Freelancers can charge by the hour, day or job and are essentially one person businesses. This “one person businesses” has different meanings and conditions depending from which part of the world you are. The rates, fees and taxes also differ from place to place (some countries are better than others, that’s a fact).

The common thing for freelancers worldwide is the high skill and quality they must put on their works. When a freelancer does a job he has to do it much better than a simple employee, he has to stand out because only that way the clients keep on coming back. You must always try to be better and better, you need to have that extra drive that makes you stand apart from the rest.

A one person business is like a one man show, so you need to remember that you have to possess a lot of other skills like:

- marketing skills, in order to promote yourself;
- connections, in order to attract clients;

financing skills (at least at a moderate level), in order to make your own accounting;

FREELANCER VS. FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE

INTRO

How would you rather work, as a freelancer or as a full time employee? A lot of people face this dilemma but it mainly should come down to: what do you prefer? Do you prefer to make your own working time and answer only to yourself or to have defined working hours and a boss to answer to?

There's no right or wrong answer to this, everybody's different, and each option has pros and cons.

In the past a secure job was everyone's goal but the world has changed... not only a secure job is something of the past but also, for companies, freelancing is now a great way of getting the job done (meeting the more and more demanding requirements of today's businesses) and most of the times at a smaller cost than having a full time employee (or team of employees).

Yes, it's true that it's not that easy to terminate an employee, but for the most part, if the company wants, you will be gone (excluding situations involving tenure or other forms of legal contracts that preclude a person from being laid off). You could argue that it is a little bit more secure to be an employee, than a consultant, because when in an equal position the consultant will be the first choice to be terminated but remember that there are many more facts taken into consideration when deciding such things.

As a consultant, on the positive side, the benefits usually mean a higher pay, (some) paid tax business expenses and (most times this is hugely important) having the freedom to choose your work/projects and being your own boss. On this note, this also allows you to determine your work hours (unless a specific project requires otherwise) - From my personal experience I can share with you that in my first consultant project I only had to be at the office one afternoon per week, as long as I delivered the work agreed upon – obviously!

WHY WOULD A COMPANY PREFER CONSULTANTS INSTEAD OF ITS OWN EMPLOYEES?

As I briefly mention in this section intro, there are some reasons for it:

Cost

First and foremost the cost; a company may have to pay more for a consultant (although not necessarily) but it won't have any other costs, such as health benefits or employment taxes. This means that an hourly

rate might be more expensive but the overall total cash outlay is probably lower. More... it costs considerably less to end a contract with a consultant than it does to terminate an employee.

Timing

Specific tasks require specific timing; if companies don't have the current resources and in-house expertise to meet a deadline they may opt to outsource it instead of hiring (and it's not just hiring someone... you don't just grab someone on the street and tell them they've been hired... there are all sort of things, mandatory things, a contract has to follow and that takes a significant amount of time to do it).

Simplicity

Following the previous reason (Cost), sometimes it is simpler to outsource than hiring (as previously explained) or even than relocating an employee. The process of hiring someone has all sort things necessary, such as:

- negotiating (salary, function, etc);
- availability (the chosen new employee may not be able to immediately join the project/company);
- adaptation (the chosen new employee has to have some time to adapt to the company, project, co-workers, etc);

None, or very little, of this would be a situation if we're talking about a consultant, and when the project is finished the company can just end the contract with no further attachments.

Specialized Skills

A company may allocate employees onto a particular task but they may need a specialized skill that is only required for a portion of the project. For instance, an IT company might have full-time developers but it needs a database security expert. In such situation, instead of hiring a full-time security employee, the company might prefer to hire a consultant for just that piece of the project.

Think Outside the Box

Companies tend to develop a certain set of internal politics and conjectures that can influence their decision making ability. An external

consultant has no such baggage (at least not regarding a new project/company). An external consultant faces much less internal barriers, difficulties or judgments than the ones an internal employee would find, thus allowing him/her to develop his/her work more 'freely'.

PROS AND CONS OF BEING A CONSULTANT / FREELANCER?

The main challenge I would say is making yourself sure that you have enough work to meet your expenses – cash flow! Consultant work nature means you have to make short term plans (usually, you don't have perspectives for more than 3-4 months ahead).

That may scare a lot of people but if you have the right set of skills in demand, the network and also the drive that should not scare you because you will have regular work.

Other challenges a consultant faces are no interaction (working alone... some people like but others don't) and assuming other responsibilities, such as:

- taking care of your taxes;
- invoicing;
- serious schedule control (if you don't schedule things very well you will eventually drift your path and ultimately you'll will not be able to fulfill the timings set with the client);
- taking care of paperwork (terms and conditions, privacy policies, etc);
- keeping track of payments;
- and maybe a few more;

Although this may sound trickier than it is... actually is fairly simple.

I would put it like this:

Pros	Cons
You're your own boss	Small contact network/number of clients (at least at the beginning)
You schedule your own time to work	Working alone
You can choose what and whom to work with	Assuming other responsibilities
Your rate is higher than an employee	

WHICH ONE SHOULD I CHOOSE – IS ONE BETTER THAN THE OTHER?

As said, there's no right or wrong here, they are just different.

If you like more freedom, being your own boss, choosing the projects you want to work on - basically having more control over your professional life - then you might consider choosing to be a consultant.

I'd advise you to think: do I think that being my own boss, managing my own time, and choosing the projects I want excites me? If the answer is not a reassuring "YES", then consulting may not be for you.

WHAT ABOUT TRYING BOTH OPTIONS?

You may be thinking: What about trying both things?

I know many people who have full-time jobs as also do consulting work on the side. This may be your way to try it without a total compromise (and see if it suits you).

Nevertheless I'd advise you to be careful. You must take into account that a full-time job with a company, usually obliges signing certain documents (ownership of intellectual property, what constitutes "company time" versus your own time, etc). Review all documents (if possible with legal counseling) before establishing a parallel consulting business.

GETTING STARTED

Actually it's not that difficult to start as a consultant. Things you need would include:

- Legal Tax and Documentation: The first thing you'll need (to form your business) is good legal/tax knowledge or someone that does it for you (filling all the necessary paperwork and getting your business up and running).
- Website: I personally would recommend using WordPress (although you can use any one you wish) - it is free and easy to use.
 - Hosting: I've tried a few hosting sites but I'd say I like Hostgator, pretty easy to use and it's easy setting it with your own WordPress site.

Note: Huge task... coming up with a good domain name that hasn't already been taken.

- Email Address: There are so many you can choose (and I use lots of them) that I'll leave this entirely to your choice.
- Billing, Invoicing & Accounting: If you want to save money you can use a spreadsheet to keep track of your hours and create your own invoices in Word/Google Docs. If you don't mind paying a little bit and have a proper system, there are a few you can choose from (like FreshBooks). There are also more complete management tools like Wave, it does everything you'll probably need, like invoicing, accounting, payments and client management.

ACQUIRING CUSTOMERS

Now that you have the previous things lined up... how do you get customers?

Let your network know about you. Contact your friends, family, partners and what not... Let them know your work.

Pretty easy, right? No... not really. First you have to be more than just: "Hi guys, I'm doing THIS, get me some business". You have to be more aggressive (in a good way) than that, if necessary rephrase your way of communicating, make it more clear, include how you can impact their business. Instead of saying "I'm a web designer" say something like "My work leverages your company engagement with the user and it appeals a wider range of consumers, with new and proved design techniques". Testimonial quotes from prior partnerships will be a solid proof of your work quality (testimonials and references are the best methods of growing a freelance / consulting business. Having your prior work "sell" you is the easiest (and most effective) form of selling.

FINAL NOTE

Your decision to be a consultant (or a full-time employee) doesn't need to be a final decision, during your career you can try both and even move back and forth between them.

As said, more than once, throughout these paragraphs... there's no right or wrong answer, it totally lays on your interests and choices depending on the point you're at, at any given moment.

WHAT IS BRANDING?

What is branding? Branding is something associated with a determined brand, it can be: an image, a flavor, a smell, a person, an emotion... anything... everything!

We could go on for hours talking about great examples but right now, from the top of my head, I can remember a few:

- The appealing design of Ferrari's cars;
- The bubbly sound and image of a Coke from Coca-Cola;
- The colored apple (fruit) symbol from Apple (brand);
- The sound that a Windows OS makes when opening – Microsoft;
- The french-fries red package from McDonald's;
- The trustworthiness/reputation of the motors produced by Mercedes;
- Etc.



Branding is extremely important at a business level; it's common and has been used for ages by the biggest companies. But in today's world not only the major companies are using branding, everybody wants to brand itself or its company because business relationships are increasingly more important to establish and the value of being associated with something is hugely important... if other people/companies remember you because of a good/catchy branding you're halfway there!

In today's market, you can't be just one more option out there. You have to stand out from your competitors (and they are not few!), you have to appeal your target audience and your way to do it is branding yourself! You have to separate yourself from the competition. You have to be more appealing to your target audience and you can achieve it by creating a recognizable personal brand.

ESTABLISHING YOURSELF AS A BRAND

Your future clients have to know who you are and for that you need to choose a brand, you can choose something simpler or something more complicated. It's your choice, just bear in mind that this will be the way your clients will identify you.

Along with a brand, you also need to choose a logo. A logo will be another way of identification.

After these two things you should also make a website and try other different ways to develop a bigger network, this will give you the attention you need.

Developing a website is crucial for your activity. First you should work on your domain name, choosing one that it is:

- Simple (not too long or confusing);
- That stands out;
- Easy to spell;
- Easy to remember;
- That can be easily associated with your activity.

After carefully choosing you're domain name you need to put information on your website. You may choose whatever you think it suits you better but there are at least 4 important tabs you need to include:

1. Introduction: a brief description/presentation or some kind of testimony;
2. Services: the services you are providing;
3. Portfolio (if you have it);
4. Contact details.

You always have to remember that now you're a business so it is important to be extremely professional and have everything according to high quality standards. In order to appear the most professional/competent as you can be you may opt to outsource the things in which you're not an expert. Remember that it is very important to give the best appearance possible and for that you have to deliver a high quality standard work (even if you have to pay someone else to do it for you).

YOUR VALUES & YOUR BRAND VISION

Your brand is what makes you unique and the way you want others to see you. Your brand should be consistent with your values, personal and professional.

VALUES

Your values are who you are.

They depend on a number of things, such as the place or environment you were brought up, the education you had, the things or people that you admire or rely on, etc, but your values will determine the options (good or bad) you choose, the actions (good or bad) you take, the thoughts (good or bad) you have, the decisions (good or bad) you make. For some, family is the most important value there is, for others its friends, his/her career, etc. When you're faced with an important decision you always take your values into consideration to find the right answer to that decision, and your answer will try to meet the best solution for the balance of your values. For instance: maybe you have a job that makes you travel a lot but you just had your first son... although before you considered that your career came first, after having a child you don't, anymore, now your family comes first.

Thus you should asses what you consider to be your most important values and include them in your brand, because you will want your brand to be perceived for the values you also have as an individual person.

BRAND VISION

As established previously, your values should be at the core of your brand. If your brand vision coincides with your personal values you'll surely be motivated and 100% focused on your brand.

In order to do the latter, you first need to envision where you want to go, meaning, what you want to achieve. For that you should consider things like: what do you like, what are you passionate about, which area suits you the best (in terms of personal and professional fulfilling). You can also inspire yourself on others and learn from them, family, friends, mentors or even idols. You can look to their experience, to the obstacles they found, to what they learned from the obstacles they conquered (and even, if not mainly, from the ones they did not). All these experiences will help you define what you want and how to get there avoiding, escaping and improving past errors.

BUILDING YOUR BRAND

In order to build a brand that looks and feels trustworthy, recognizable and appealing you need to be and look professional. There are key things you should rely on to build a brand, such as:

YOUR BRAND IMAGE – “VISIBLE” THINGS

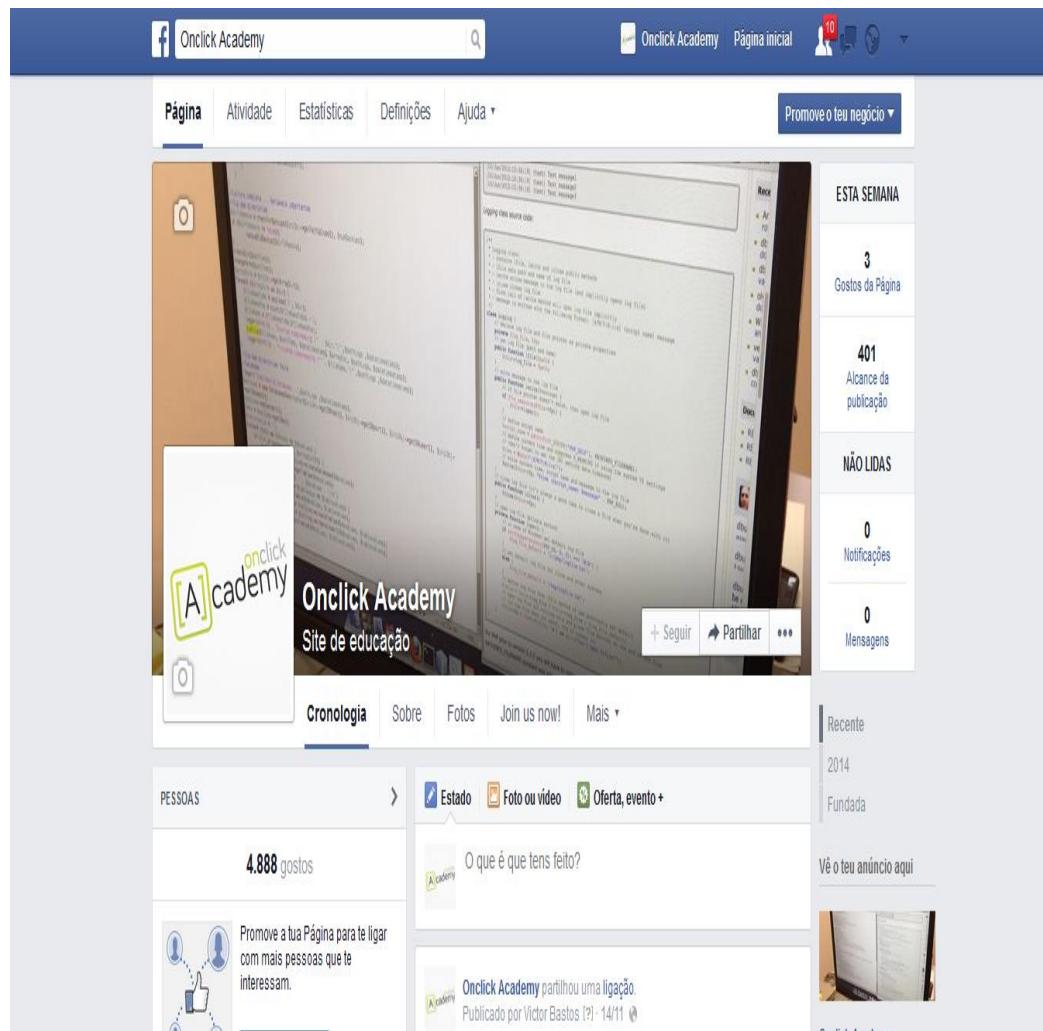
Your brand image is possibly the first contact of your brand with your future clients, and everybody knows that first impressions are the key to success. The image you give must look the most clean, recognizable, appealing, attractive and professional as it can be. In order to do that you should build 5 extremely important fields of image:

1. **Website** – Your website is your presence in the biggest business market that exists, the Internet. It is the broadest way you have of showcasing your brand to the world. I cannot stress how important it is to have a fully functional website where you can introduce your brand, explain what problem your brand solves, how great your brand is, how amazing your portfolio is, etc. Of course your website must look as professional as it can be and you must spend time “taking care of your baby”, refresh your contents, display your new clients (as you gain them) in order to attract others, put some videos to vary the content, put pictures (of yourself or your business partners, co-workers, workers, employees), etc.



2. **Social Networks** – Needless to say that the importance of social networks is overwhelming. Your brand can make it or break it for the content/picture/comments of your social network channels, just look at what happened when Portugal's football (soccer for the US) team played against Sweden. Swedish Pepsi branch used their social networks (facebook and others) to trash on Cristiano Ronaldo (which is currently one of, if not the, best world football players and star, and captain, of the Portuguese squad). Maybe the campaign was successful in Sweden but surely not in Portugal... people were so furious that started to post comments on Pepsi's facebook. Pepsi had to publicly apologize and probably lost consumers (and not only in Portugal since Ronaldo is a worldwide phenomenon...).

So... social networks are hugely important, but as important as having them is the message you're trying to pass. Although it's arguable if bad publicity is in fact bad publicity and not just publicity (hence the saying, I don't care if they talk bad about me... as long as they talk about me).



3. **Photos/Images** – Include yours and your team photos, your works and your projects images. Include them wherever you can (as long as it makes sense, of course). It is easier to connect to a face than just to a name, simple as that. Don't use funny or party photos... unless that's right up your brand alley, or following the idea you're trying to give. For the most cases, use the same idea as the one from the website, clean and professional photos/images.

Become a Web Developer From Scratch!



The Advanced Web Developer Course

How to Create a Million Dollar Course On Udemy!



OnClick Academy



4. **Business Cards** – Maybe they're falling in disuse but I still consider business cards a great way to expand your contacts, and can be your savior if unexpectedly you encounter some important contact... there, right there, your business card can be your only way of making a future contact. Despite this, I know most of the times that card is thrown to the back of the desk drawer, or even straight to the garbage, but I still considered them to be a nice and kind way of contact between you and your client (in some countries, Japan for example, it is very important to give your card to the other person, and even more important is the way you hand it). If you're counterpart cares, even if a small bit, for your contact/business this is a great way to make an impression. In your business card you can also include all sorts of messages, logos, name, address, phone number, etc. And if you make it a keeper it will not only be remembered but also it will be commented on how great it is. Be creative, be original, be unique... stand out from all the rest!



5. **E-mail Signature** – We all know how important a message is for a brand. One of the ways a brand contacts their clients is by e-mail and not only the message is important! I consider an e-mail signature as I consider the business cards, apart from the written content the thoughts remain the same here. Be creative, be original, be unique... stand out from the all the rest!



YOUR BRAND IMAGE (PERCEPTION) – “INVISIBLE” THINGS

Your brand must rely on several other things than image (“physical” images from the previous point). There are other “invisible” (not palpable), abstract, concepts you must establish for your brand to be credible and turn it unique and distinguishable as it can be. Here we will go through some of those.

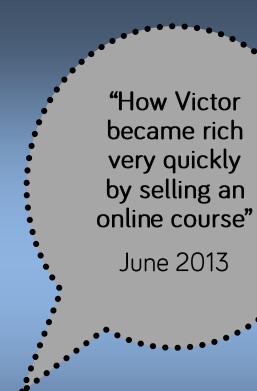
1. **Worth Remembering** – You or your brand have to be noticed. Of course that's easier said than done but there are several ways for you to do it. It's a fact that people who do unexpected things are the ones who are remembered, not the ordinary ones. Although you don't need to act strange or be quirky for it. Just remember your own experience, I'm sure you knew someone just briefly but it made an impact and you still remember him/her. You just have to do that but without looking or seeming odd. For example, in a job interview the ones who stand out are the ones that can bring that little extra to the hiring company. Maybe they connect better because they have shown an additional interest, or know more about the company than the rest. Maybe they have a similar interest (such as a hobby) with the person interviewing them and because they both collect stamps and spent most of the interview connecting at a personal level instead of the professional. Take in consideration that small details can make a huge difference.

Be passionate, go that extra mile in order to show you're the best choice for the job. You have to show that you're not just another sheep in the herd.

That's what stands out and makes you be unique (remember the branding explanation at the introduction?!) something that can make you remembered for.

2. **Be Original** – This is somewhat similar to the previous point (Worth Remembering), maybe we can consider it as a sub point. Your brand originality is one of the reasons for which you may be remembered. Being original normally means being groundbreaking and being groundbreaking is usually a good thing (unless your work isn't and that will be a setback on your originality). A way to put in practice your originality is exploring your competition, try to identify where they fail and what areas of their work their client's complaint more about. If you can identify that, you can then apply it to your brand, making it not only original but one that can solve a problem that others fail to solve.

3. **Expressiveness** – Be expressive when talking about your brand, be honest and meaningful. This works the same for every level of interaction, personal or professional. I can assure you that if you're honest, expressive and mean what you say, or about what you're talking about, when you interact with someone else, that person will be able to see it and thus will be impressed if you're passionate about it or will dismiss you if you don't show it.
4. **Consistency**– Deliver a consistent work, always! Your work should always be consistent at an optimum level (of course!). If you keep on delivering an optimum work to your clients you will build your relationship with them, they will remember that whatever they ask you, you can deliver it greatly, on schedule and error free. Believe it or not, I think most of the times consistency prevails over raw talent, just think on what you prefer: a brand that consistently gives you excellent work on various levels or one that can deliver an optimum/amazing work on one level and a medium one on all the other levels? A bad job is easier to be remembered than ten excellent ones, and that can destroy your reputation.
5. **Credibility** – Your credibility is the combination of all the previous situations. You can also spread your credibility by associating your brand with other brands, the more important the brand you associate with, the more your brand will earn in credibility. If you gain an outstanding credibility the word will spread and other clients will hear and know about you. Invest your time in developing your contacts and try to show your brand in all sorts of platforms: newspapers, radio, etc (we will get more into this later ahead).



The Sydney Morning Herald

YOUR BRAND IMAGE – THE UNIQUE FACTOR (MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE)

I've already mentioned it in a couple of previous points, I want to address the unique factor, once again, and give it the highlight it deserves, because as you'll see, its importance is crucial.

Each previous theme/category (call it as you want) should, as a whole, contribute to define your uniqueness as a brand but there are some other things from my personal experience that I want to share with you. I think they made me somewhat unique and that was one of the secrets for such success. These were some that I consider to have worked for me, that doesn't necessarily mean that they will work for you but I want to share them (because I consider them to have been crucial for me) so you can get an idea and maybe try to find your own ways of making your brand unique:

1. **(The beginnings) Purpose / Course Speech & Content** – My initial motivation to do the “Become a Web Developer from Scratch!” course was to make my own “diary”, a way where I could also improve my knowledge by making the videos. The content and the way I initially (I say initially because as the course grew in students I updated it and made it more professional) recorded it was very informal and I think that to have, in a way, appealed to the students. I think the students saw a content driven course but made in a simple and informal way that ultimately caught their attention because of that. Although this can clash with the idea of being professional, that we have already talked about, it fits perfectly in the “Worth Remembering” and “Be Original” points and with the fact of being honest. Sometimes some things are more important than others and you have to find the adequate balance for each one, and where to apply them.
2. **Personal Involvement / Interaction with Students** – Another factor I consider to have been very important was the way I connected with my students. At the time (when Udemy was starting to grow) the student – instructor interaction didn't seem, at least to me, to have been fully explored. The students acquired a course, watched it and that's it, the interaction was not there. Students wanted more than just seeing the videos, they wanted to make questions, they wanted to test their knowledge with exercises, test, projects, etc. One thing I tried (and I still do it) was to answer all my students questions within a maximum time period of 24 hours. I also included lots of exercises, guides, tests and projects to the course content. Basically I found a lack in the way the courses were handed and I differentiated myself by giving more to the

students. That I consider to have been a huge differential in the way students approached my course. They saw a commitment between them and the instructor and they saw I gave them more than normal and that was a way to please them and make them happy.

3. **Build a Community** – Due to the fast user growth of the “Become a Web Developer from Scratch!” course and to the interaction that the course was having, not just between me and the students but also between the students themselves, I saw an opportunity of growing a community. I try to constantly update the content of the course, to give feedback (through announcements and other available means), to promote learning discussions between the students and to encourage students to answer each other questions, which is also a great way of learning; practicing. The sense of belonging to a community makes you be much more interested about things (in this case what you’re learning) than just being alone, that’s an obvious fact. Within a community of your peers you feel that you’re more protected and in this particular case you take immediate advantages because you can question your colleagues and you’ll find people with the same doubts and people who had already had that doubt and now are ready to solve it and help another fellow student. That’s a community work in progress!

Ultimately the idea of such community led me to my most recent project: Onclick Academy.

Onclick Academy will also be a platform for students to learn (it’s going to start with web development but in the future it may have other subjects) but will be much more than that! I don’t want to overload you with information about it so if you want to check it you can click the Onclick’s image in page 5 or go to: <http://onclickacademy.com/>.

4. **Diversify / Use Several Languages** – As you may already know, I’m both Spanish and Portuguese. Although my courses are done in English (for obvious reasons) I always knew I wanted to diversify the language offer. To stay true to my heritage and also because it opens so much more market possibilities. Of course I am lucky enough to be able to pull this all by myself but even if you can’t do it yourself try to translate it nevertheless. Make partnerships if necessary. There isn’t much more to this point than this... ☺

5. **Build Your Path / Start From Scratch & Work Your Way Through** – That’s exactly it... I didn’t do it on purpose but this simple idea was a hell of a great marketing idea! Unconsciously I found my niche (or maybe not so niche...) market, people that didn’t knew nothing about

web development but wanted to learn it. The “Become a Web Developer from Scratch!” course gave them the possibility of starting without previous knowledge but still being able to understand and learn their way through the course. Other positive thing about it was the path created, you first grew your basis/foundations and then build up on those rather than being overwhelmed with tons of information from all directions and then having to join it all without having a proper sequence (and let’s be honest... some courses where like that... deploys of content without any sequence or logic to it).

For all the explained previously, I consider these points to have helped make me unique and ultimately they were a key factor on my success, that's why I consider them so dearly and give them such a huge importance. You should also find your way to be unique and one way could be to search for the gaps/flaws of your competitors.



WHERE CAN YOU FIND WORK?

There are several ways to find work, I can't, as no one else can, assure you that they will work but I'll try to give you some ideas:

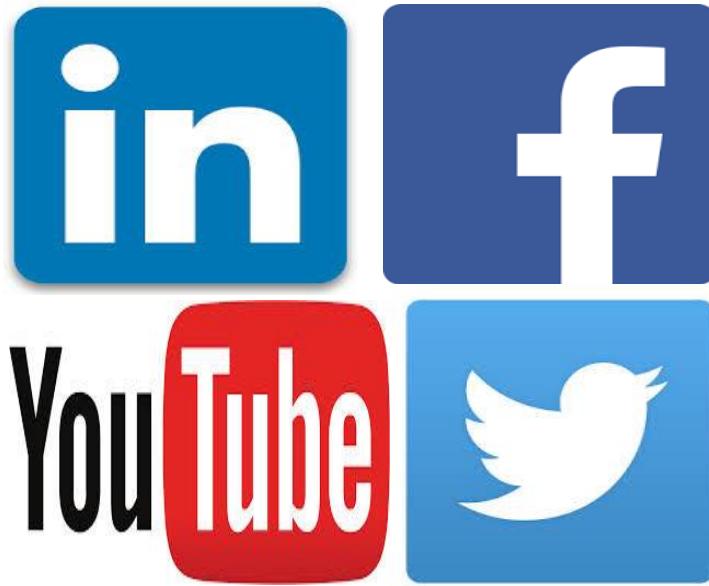
- The first thing I would advise is to try your already existing network, your former employers, your friends or/and family, just about anyone you can remember. Spread the word as much as you can.
- Along with that, or in case you don't have the previous option, you have all types of freelancer sites that give you the possibility to post your profile/curriculum and be chosen by clients to do their works. Sites like: Elance.com, Freelancer.com, etc. Here you can build your reputation with the works assigned to you and scale your network. The most common downside of these sites is the huge competition and the reduced prices practiced.
- Another option is advertisement. You can advertise your work offline (for your local market) or/and online (for the world). A good way to do this is to make your site visible. You can try to master "the ways of the online force" and advertise on the web, you can also, and this is probably your best option, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) your site, this will put you on top of the Google search ranking, giving you you're much needed visibility.

ENHANCE YOUR BRAND EXPOSURE

Your website, facebook page, etc (the visible things we talked about previously) are your brand exposure attempts to reach a massive number of people. These are the places for your clients to search for your information or get in contact with you but... how do you increase your brand exposure, both if you have some clients and want more or most importantly if you have none. There are a few ways to try to grow your "followers" but all of them mean you have to go after them; sitting still won't get you there. Where can you increase your audience?

SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

The first thing you should do is build your social communities. In today's, world it's important to secure social usernames, URLs and anything else that can relate to your brand. Although there are lots of options, for me, these are the most important social profiles:



1. **Linkedin** – This is where you should start. LinkedIn is the largest and most recognized social community for professionals. Here you must build your brand, associate it with you, with everyone working with you and all people (contacts) you already have. LinkedIn is great because of the exposure it gives your brand and for me the best feature is the one where people recommend others based on their skills, if you search for some of the big names of your industry you will see they have an enormous network of connections and their skills have been recommended a ridiculous number of times.
2. **Facebook** – Facebook is also a great option but is not as recognized as a professional network as LinkedIn. Facebook is more an option on posting your news, thoughts and funny stories or pictures. The great thing about Facebook is the followers/number of “likes” your brand has. Here, once again, you can check the ridiculous number on both, and that’s what makes the difference.
3. **Twitter** – Twitter is another good option. This is a huge trend right now and a brand can get exposure by its “tweets”. The idea is more or less the same as Facebook but here you have to be concise, since you only have a very limited number of characters you can use. Also, regarding the big influencers out there, the ridiculousness factor is the same as the previous ones.
4. **YouTube (and other video websites)** – Also a nice way of exposing your brand as these types of channels are gaining more and more importance each day.

BLOGS

A blog is also your way of gaining exposure through your posts, directing them to your audience to your website. Here you can also showcase your knowledge with articles regarding the subjects your brand wants to address. A blog is the most popular Content Management System (CMS), and I'd personally recommend using WordPress. WordPress is not so difficult to master and gives you all sorts of tools to use in your blog.

This is awesome but... how can you attract people (or more people) to see your posts?

Well... this is a tricky one but there are ways to do it:

- The most obvious is writing “sharing quality” posts. Even if you have a small audience, if your post has “star quality” it only takes one person to share it. If one person shares your post it will reach others, and if one of the others shares again it will reach more, and... you get the picture.

The “star quality” of your post could be defined by your writing skills or by its content subject. We already talked about subjects that are keener to raise controversy and that can be explored but in this case I would also recommend to write about subjects related to your brand that are “hot” in that moment.

But surely the best subject to write about would be about the most influential persons in your brand industry. To write about big names is always a two way winning situation; you not only attract audience, because you’re posting about someone important, but also may attract that particular person you’re writing about. And if you do... well... unless you’re trashing them, there’s a good chance that can feel interested in you (your brand).

- Of course if you want people to share your posts you need to include share buttons in there. Put Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn buttons in all your posts (this also serves for other contents you may have, it’s always a good idea to have share buttons for the content you wish others would see).
- Other way to do it would be to write content for other blogs. Try to get in contact with other bloggers and see if they would like to have your posts in their blog. Of course you should do it with blogs that have bigger audiences and adequate your posts to that particular blog; look for the posts that have been more successful in the past and try to

follow the same line of thought. Guest blogging would give you wider exposure and contact network, but remember that these posts have to be the most perfect posts ever because the other blogger owner trust “lies on your shoulders”.

ASSOCIATE & RELATE (IN PERSON) – FIND VIP PEOPLE TO CONNECT WITH

Finding people you can connect and relate to, at a professional level, in your local area is still a great way of establishing connections – Face to face interaction is still very important despite online opportunities. I’m sure that there are a lot of events in your city (or near it) that you can attend to meet people who share the same interests than you and your brand. Just go to Google and search for businesses events, in your city, that can relate to you or your brand (maybe you can add – professional - to your search).

This is a great way of exposing your brand and establishing partnerships, or just building relationships that lead to opportunities. Find the events that suit you, or your brand, the best and to connect with people and learn what others are doing in their professional lives.

ONLINE ADVERTISING

Last, but surely not least, online advertising! You must have seen this coming; this is the most obvious way of gaining clients. Advertising on the web is probably your best option and gives you lots of tools to correctly address the audience you should address. For example, you can range a specific region, gender, age, etc.

1. **Google (Other Search Engines)** – Use Google adwords. Search engines are the way to advertise online. I’m not sure on how many users go through Google every second but I’m pretty sure it’s a lot more than several gazillions! Try to appeal to your niche market (if it is niche, of course), use keywords to attract people’s attention and make them click it. Direct them to your website and then your website should do the rest – hook them up!
2. **Facebook Ads** – Use Facebook ads. Facebook is probably the 2nd best way (after Google) of advertising online. Facebook offers you several options to choose from in order to reach your target audience (you can even choose which target age audience you want to reach). And it’s not that expensive, ads start from \$1 a day.

3. Linkedin Ads– Use Linkedin ads. Since Linkedin is network for professionals this is an option you must consider. Linkedin not only allows you to use all the criteria Google or Facebook use but also allows you to focus on such things as audience per sector, company size, etc.

Always remember a key thing about exposing your brand online is doing SEO (Search Engine Optimization). This will put you on top of the Google search ranking, giving you you're much needed visibility.



DEFINE YOUR RATE

Now that you have things prepared to start, your next step should be defining what to charge for your services. I would say that normally freelancers charge by the work hour but it can vary depending on a lot of factors (such as your local market, the type of job, etc). There are a couple of examples to help you with your decision:

- You can check the prices practiced in your local market, this will give a great indicator of what to charge without under or over charging.
 - You can also try to make your own math. First you need to consider your own costs: the time you'll need to do the job, the difficulty of the job, the timeline of the client (if the client needs it urgently you can charge a bit more, since it will require you to make it faster than normal), etc. After that you should consider any additional costs: if you need someone else expertise, if you need to pay for anything related to that job, etc. The final thing it would be the profit... you're profit! You should asses what you consider reasonable. Remember... you need to try and balance this scale, neither under nor over charging!
- When defining a price for a job, one thing you can also try is making an estimate of the price. This is a great option (if your client doesn't mind) because if the estimative proves to be longer* it will be easier to justify it and with that redo the price. In the cases you choose to make an estimate it is good to write them up, with the tasks descriptions, time spent for each task, etc. This will make it more transparent for you and for your client.

* The two most common situations where an estimate can prove to be incorrect are:

1. If you don't estimate correctly how much work is involved and the time it needs to be done.
2. If the client doesn't, for whatever reason, give the correct information (for you to correctly estimate it).

Regarding the approach you can make to your clients you have some options, for example:

- If you already have your own contacts/clients (like former employers or friends or/and family) maybe your approach can be setting a medium/high price, because you already have their trust.

Remember that this doesn't mean that you can relax with the quality or timing of your work, a client is only fully satisfied when you successfully fulfill all its parameters, not only the price.

- If you have to enter the market without any previous contacts/clients, you can try an approach like lowering your rates. This may sound difficult to hear but it is a smart strategy to gain clients and increase your network. Lower prices make you more attractive to clients (don't get fooled... clients always want to pay less if they have that option). As you increase your network you may progressively raise your rates, for the new incoming clients.

TERMS & CONDITIONS / PRIVACY POLICY

I'd recommend you to have a document/s that displays your terms and conditions and your privacy policy. Terms and conditions and privacy policy are document/s that you can prepare (if you are not expert in this or if you have that option you may want to outsource this to a legal expert) in order to protect yourself and your work. In the Terms & Conditions / Privacy Policy you can set your terms of agreement and privacy, information like:

- Copyright;
- Privacy issues;
- Rights and responsibilities (both yours and of the client);
- Payments terms;
- Etc.

Bear in mind that most clients (if not all) also have their Terms & Conditions / Privacy Policy that will probably surpass your own and also remember that sometimes too much bureaucracy from your part may alienate some clients.

INVOICING

An invoice is the final document, in a transaction, that states the amount to pay. Although the information within the invoice (as well as the invoice itself) may differ from country to country, place to place, normally invoices contain:

- Information from both parties in a transaction;
- Description of the service provided;
- Transaction amount;
- Required legal and tax information
- Way of payment ¹⁾;
- Due date of payment ²⁾.

¹⁾ Regarding the way of payment I'd suggest you give multiple options to your clients, for instance: cash, paypal, bank transfer or credit card transfer.

²⁾ Regarding the due date of payment I'd recommend you to set a maximum time frame for it. You can define the due date of payment starting from the moment of issuance until 30, 60 or 90 days after (the less it is, the better for you of course!).

PAYMENT

Here you can give your client two options:

- You can split the payment in 2/3 times (or as many as you like); or
- Receive the total amount by end of the work.

Some things you can take into consideration while defining this:

1) Dividing the payment in 2 or 3 times may be pleasant for both parts, although I'd only recommend this for big works. Such a solution would appeal to the client because he will have smaller amounts to pay at a time and will also be helpful to you because you will not have to wait until the end of the work to get paid.

If you use this option just remember that this would have to be reflected in both the Terms & Conditions as in the Invoice.

2) Most clients like to play safe and prefer to have a fixed price instead of an estimate, which tends to become more expensive than initially predicted

3) If most clients prefer a fixed price it is obvious that you always prefer an estimate because this gives you the safety of predicting... let's call it "unexpected situations".

4) Some works are impossible to have a fixed price (for instance, the work "is still open" and may change during the process), in such situations you can estimate a price variation. You must try to maintain the variation within a reasonable margin, let's say within 25% of the total price.

5) When you estimate a work, I'd recommend you to clearly state the tasks, duration of each task, price for each task, etc.

5.1) this is useful to the client, since he will easily see all the tasks involved in the job and how you rate them, etc.

5.2) and it's also useful for yourself, since you can track all your tasks easier. For this you can use any of the time tracking programs/applications available like Basecamp (or just an excel sheet).

CLIENTS

ALL YOU
NEED IS
~~LOVE~~
CLIENTS
~~LOVE IS~~
ALL YOU
NEED.

If you own your own brand, you're responsible for maintaining your clients or customers faithful to it. These provide your brand revenue and you can't afford to lose them.

In most situations, if you deliver a great work, exceed your client expectations and keep them happy they will be pleased with your brand and will keep coming back for more! But... sometimes it's impossible to maintain a customer. Imagine for example the scenario were a client goes bankrupt (or maybe just wants to pay you less than you or your brand are willing to charge), there's no way for you to keep them loyal. Were you scared?! Wait! Don't despair just yet... these are unlikely scenarios, in most cases there are some pointers you can follow and that will pretty much guarantee that you will retain your clients (and you'll be so good doing it that they will praise you or your brand so much that they'll attract more clients without you doing anything!).

A key factor to a brand-client relationship is giving your client special attention and going that extra mile, if needed. We'll go more into detail in the following pages but 3 key things are: be extremely professional, the quality of your work has to be outstanding and the price should be the appropriate.

Let's break it down by topics:

DELIVER A GREAT WORK

This is a no brainer and it is the most important thing you have to take into consideration: deliver an optimum quality work to your clients! Of course this depends from case to case but there are some common tips you can follow in order to achieve greatness:

- **Pay attention** – Pay close attention to what your clients say. Always seem interested and try to create a closer relationship with your client (without invading its space, of course). Anticipate their needs, try to understand their expectations and define your work accordingly. If you pay attention you will also eventually pick up on their habits, manners and you will later know how to deliver things as they want.
- **Plan ahead** – Prepare yourself and your work in advance, if you plan ahead you won't be surprised by last minute changes. Sometimes hell breaks loose and it's mayhem... clients need extra things that you didn't know about or they want you to do other works when you didn't planned time to do extra work, that's why you should plan ahead and try to leave time for those kinds of surprises (it's not just your clients that can create chaos... sometimes you can't follow your own plans, maybe you have to go somewhere in between or something extraordinary happens). Planning helps you stay ahead and also to prep for contingencies without a panic.
- **Do more and better each time** – Do more than what is asked or what is planned to do. Any client will be happy to see you deliver a great work and even happier if you did that little extra something. There are several examples we can apply here, in my case I can give you a couple:
 - **Deadline**: if you can do it faster (without compromising the quality), deliver the work before schedule;
 - **Price**: if the work was easier to do than you expected, make a small price adjustment (your client will be very happy... for sure!).
- **Don't miss your deadline** – Define your deadlines according to your pace and time needs, but set them reasonably and deliver it as promised; nothing aggravates a client more than a broken promise and

that will surely escalate to the client not trusting you. You should be thorough when doing it; there is no worse thing than missing a deadline.

- **You can't do it all** – Following the previous point, you must know your limit. You have to know what's too much and what you can do in the amount of time you have. Multi-tasking is a great thing to have on a résumé but it's easier said than done. In order to deliver your best work, you need to have time to really focus on it and if you take too many things on your shoulders you will be rushing from one to another and something is eventually going to fail.

A great way to “get this picture” is; think about sports – it’s the NBA finals, the last game... the game it decides the champion. The team “A” is winning by one point, with less than one second to go, but the other team has two free throws. The player on the free throw line is undeniably this game MVP (he scored 70% of his team points and was the assisting player for all the points he didn’t score) but - “only god knows why” – he misses both shots and his team loses the game and the championship... what do you think will prevail in people’s memory? The fact that he did the best game in history or that he missed his last two chances and because of that his team lost the game? People always remember more and give more importance to one bad job than to 10 great ones. And from that moment on, you’ll be always “scarred” by that bad moment.

EXCEED THEIR EXPECTATIONS

This is a great way to be remembered and to draw attention to you or your brand. Although not all clients, in all situations, recognize your extra efforts (who told you life was fair?!), sometimes they do and when they do it you score big points!

One great way of doing it is trying to understand where others, before you, failed and making sure you don’t. But there are more:

- **Give them the importance they have** – Ask your clients for their opinion, about the work you are working on, or about the works you have already done before. Appear to be interested in their opinion and also try to show them you will include their suggestions in the work.

- **Give them more value than they are asking for** – Think about extras valuable things you can give to your clients. Depending on your brand market area you can define such valuable things.

For example, you should offer advises/tips on situations where you are sure your input will be not only appreciated but it will also improve the work done. Unless you know they are unwilling to accept your input or if this does not apply to your case, you can also give them your ideas on other subjects than the one you are working one and share your expertise.

Or sometimes, for a number of reasons, clients need an extra effort from your part (it can be an extra feature, a schedule that was anticipated or something like that) and if you can deliver in these kind of situations you will score big with a client! As long as the quality of your work isn't affected this is a great way to make a difference in comparison to your competitors.

Nevertheless you need to be wise, don't let them get used to this, if you're always making extra efforts sooner or later the client will no longer see it as it is... a favor.

- **Show them you appreciate their business / Become a spokesman for their company** – Build your brand relationship with your client, invest time in it. Be sure to embrace their company as your own and let them know that you tell amazing things about them to others.

To send holiday cards is great but not enough (and in this case you should try to know if your client isn't one who doesn't like holiday cards... there's a lot of people who consider it too cheesy, I'm one of them...) ☺

GREAT PRACTICES (TO HAVE WITH YOUR CLIENTS)

More things you need to consider to become memorable to your clients:

- **Always be there for them** – You should always be accessible for your client, he must be able to reach you through phone, e-mail, etc. It is very important that you are flexible and make yourself available when a client wants to contact you.

- **Be flexible** – Try to adapt to their needs and/or demands. Don't be picky, ask them what they need and if necessary how they want you to do it.
- **Return their contacts** – Do you know how annoying it is to contact someone and then not get their contact back?! Don't do it...
- **Maintain contact with them** – Especially if some time goes by. If you don't hear about them for a long time try to talk with them by e-mail or phone. Most times it's great if your client doesn't bother you but the truth is - you don't want them to forget about you.
- **Ask personal questions** – Don't overdo it but:
 - Greet them;
 - Ask them how they are;
 - How things are going;
 - Make small talk.

Try to establish a closer bond between you both.

- **Talk the way they want** – Understand how they like to be addressed and the way they like to talk, and adjust yourself to it. Everybody is different and have their own mannerisms, try to get that and use it in your favor.

THINGS YOU MUST NEVER DO!

The “no no” things you must avoid:

- **Deny your mistakes, if the mistake is yours assume it** – Sometimes you're wrong, it's unavoidable. Sometimes you make mistakes, that's life.
If that's the case, don't deny them, don't blame others, don't use excuses. Recognize it and do it faster. People tend to understand and forgive mistakes if you assume them but they don't tend to understand them or forgive them if you blame everyone and everything except yourself.
- **Issuing invoices without your client knowledge** It's good practice to estimate fees and costs up front but if you have doubts, always leave room for something extra that may occur and let your client know about



it. Not telling your client that you will charge him something he didn't knew about is your one way ticket to nevermore land!

I hope you have enjoyed this guide, that it can help you in your learning and ultimately that it helps you achieve your purposes!

Thank you!