

# Everything is Difficult

True Confessions of a Freelance Developer



**Everything**  
*is Difficult*

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@joshbroton



**Josh Broton**

*@joshbroton || joshbroton.com*

# Everything is Difficult

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**Everything**  
*is Difficult*

# Josh Broton

@joshbroton  
joshbroton.com



- 1 Owner/Founder  
*Broton Digital Consulting*
- 2 Founder  
*Prestige Conference*
- 3 CTO/JavaScript/Frontend  
*14 startups*

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# **Everything**

*is Difficult*

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I am easily  
distracted



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**BROTY**  
+COFFEE  
+NERVES



# What This Talk Should Be

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Conference sessions should never aim to teach the audience something, but rather inspire them to want to learn.

*-Ted Neward*

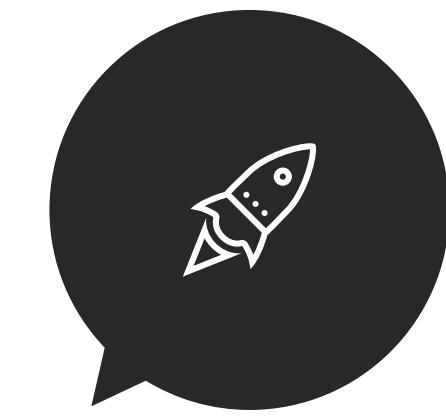
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## What this session will cover

*I hear Gary and Jessi  
have awesome sessions.*



The right time to  
jump



A recipe for  
success



Lessons learned

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Hosted at [GIFSFORUM.com](http://GIFSFORUM.com)



I HAVE NO  
IDEA WHAT  
I'M DOING

The Time is  
Now?!?!



# Everything

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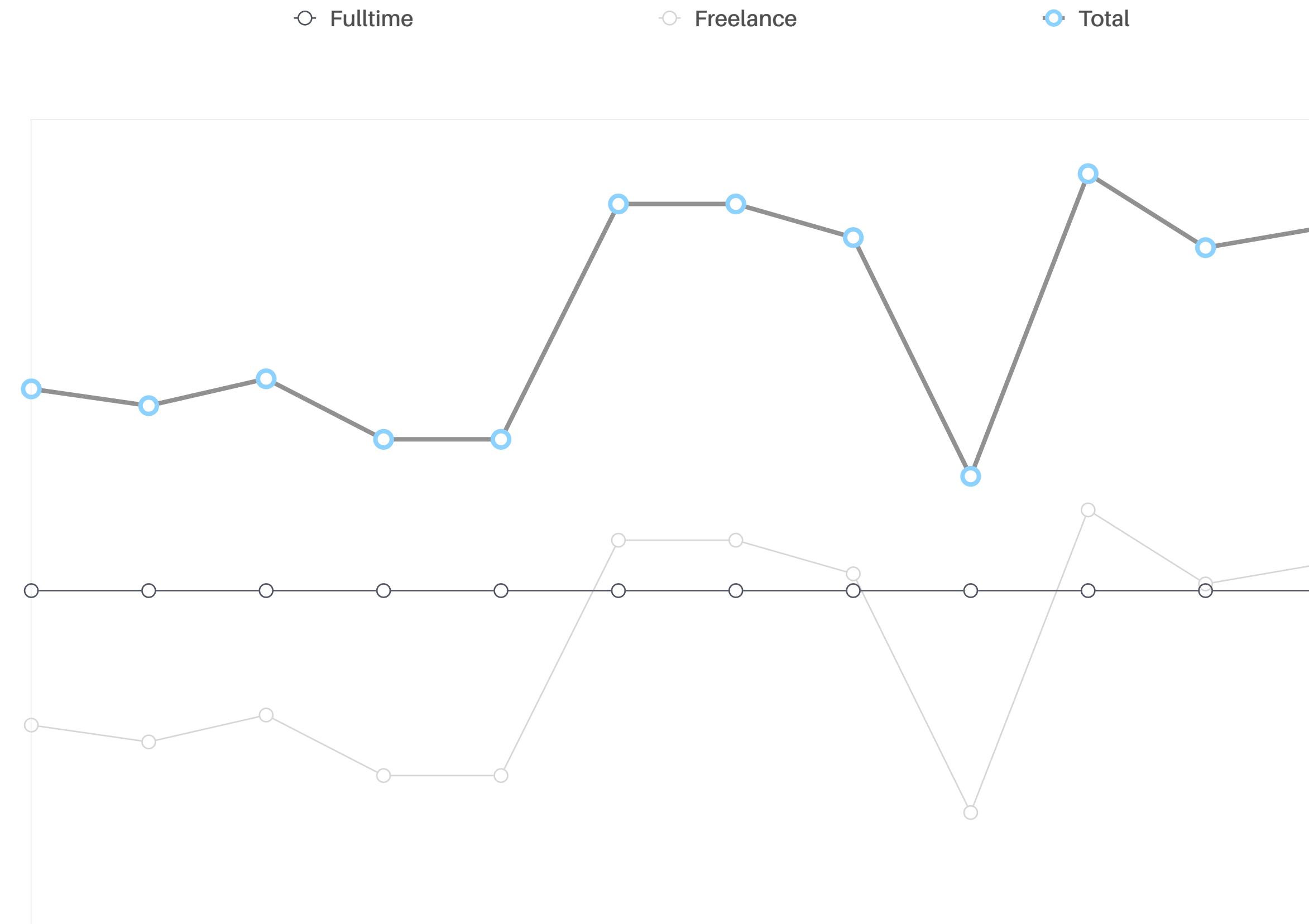


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# Josh's Monthly Income

*Fulltime and  
freelance income*

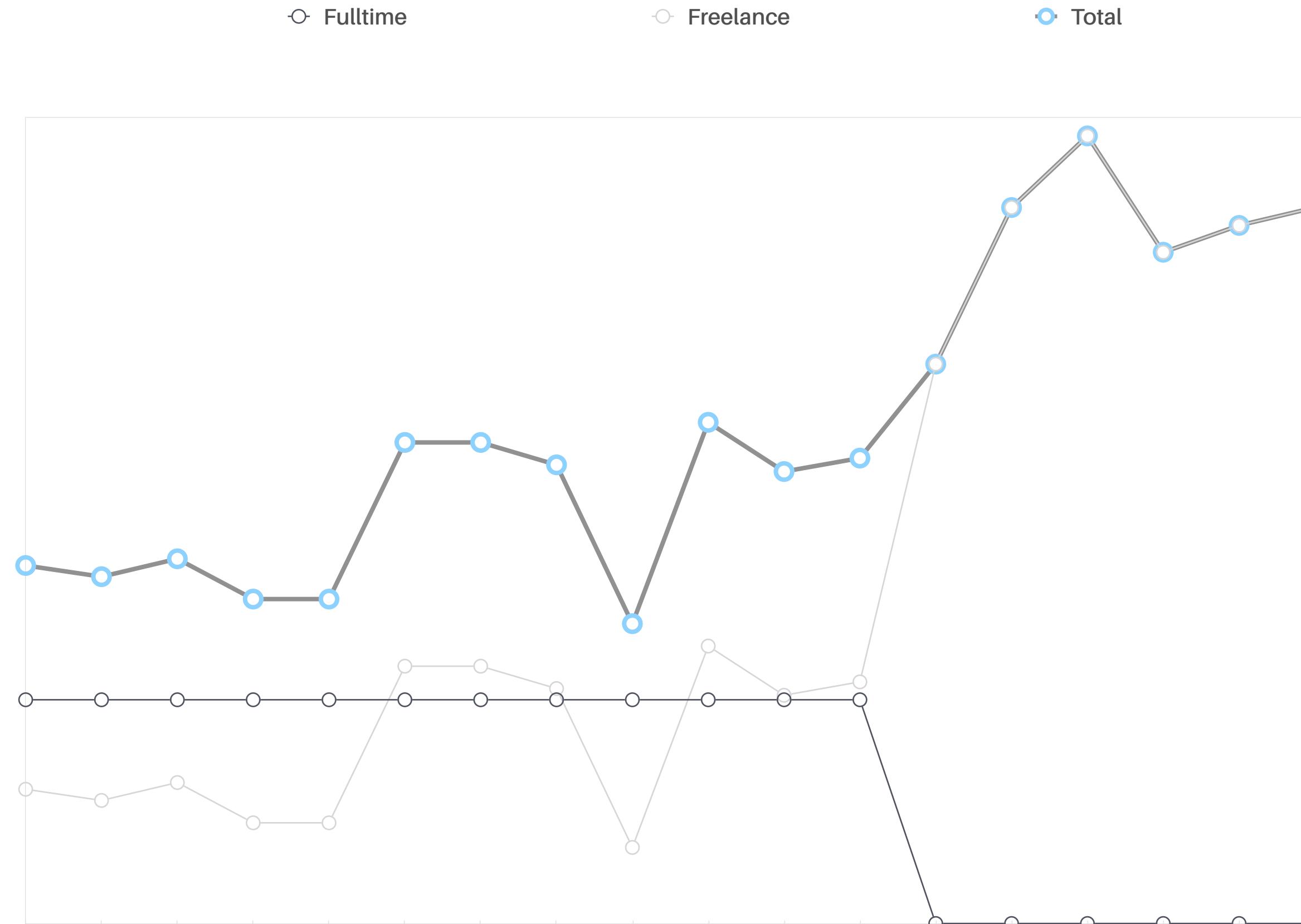


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# Josh's Monthly Income

*Fulltime and  
freelance income*

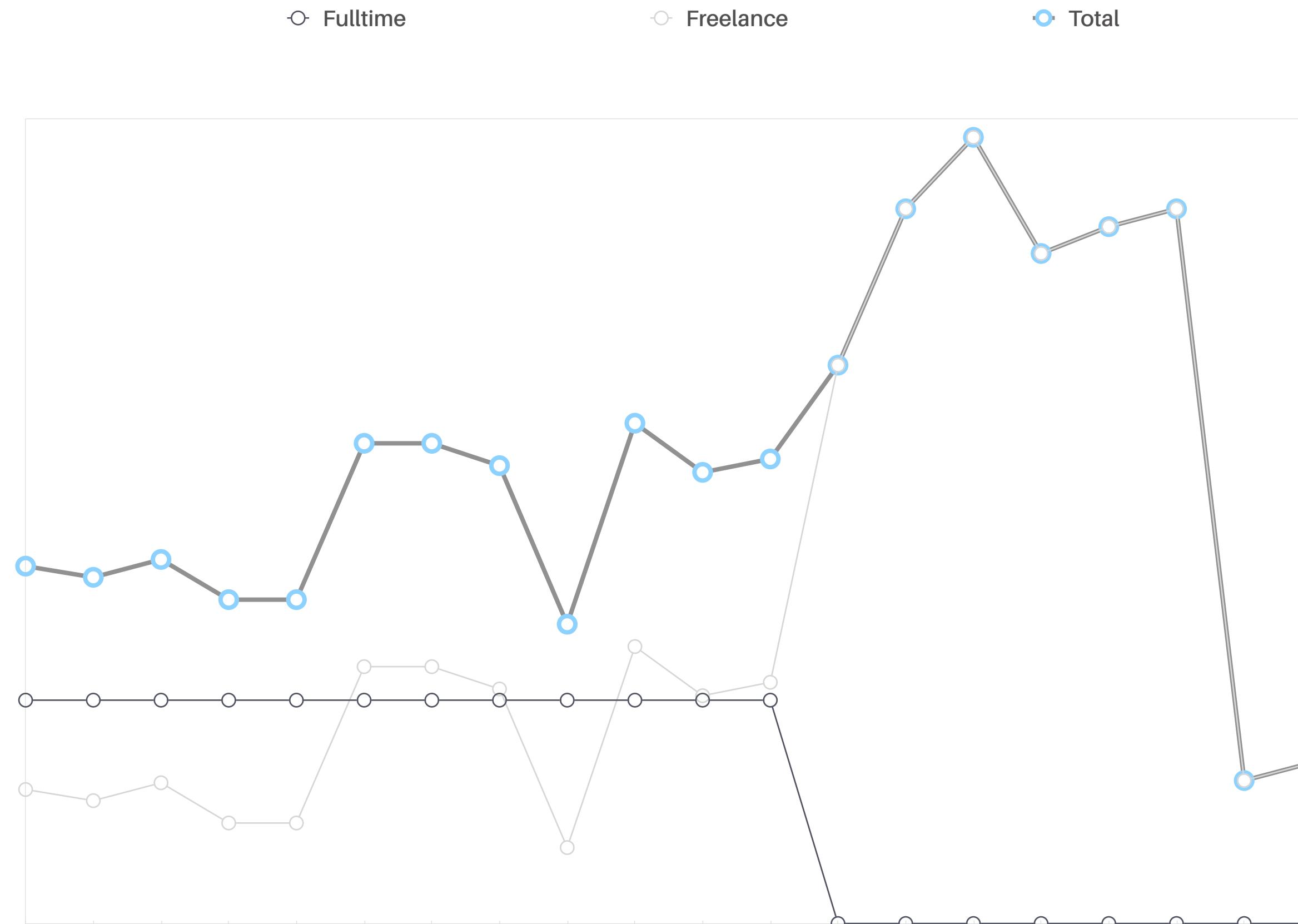


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# Josh's Monthly Income

*Fulltime and  
freelance income*



A painting of a man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a dark suit and tie, looking down at an open book. He is holding a pen in his right hand. The background is a warm-toned room.

The best-laid  
plans of mice and  
men...



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# **Everything**

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# **Preparing for Success**

*Things you can do to  
secure your future*



**Network now  
and later**

Your contacts are  
your lifeline



**Never stop  
learning**

The danger is in  
what you don't know  
you don't know

The entrepreneur's  
mantra:  
Grow or die.

My version:  
Success through  
evolution

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**I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M DOING**

# **Everything** *is Difficult*

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## **Preparing for Success**

*Things you can do to  
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**Never stop  
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The danger is in  
what you don't know  
you don't know



**Start with clients**

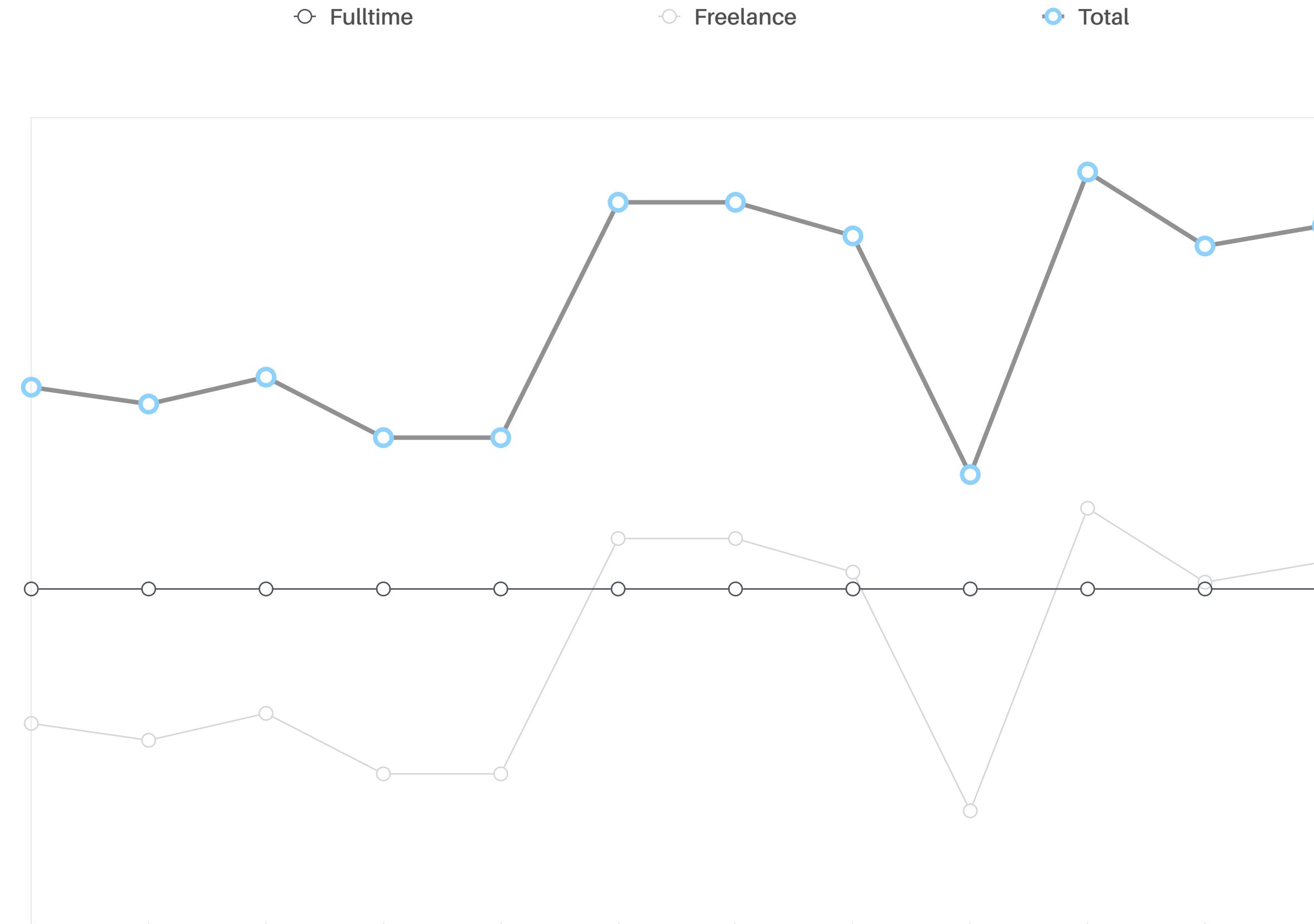
Have 30 hrs/wk  
minimum, for at least  
two months

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*is Difficult*

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# Josh's Monthly Income

*Fulltime and  
freelance income*



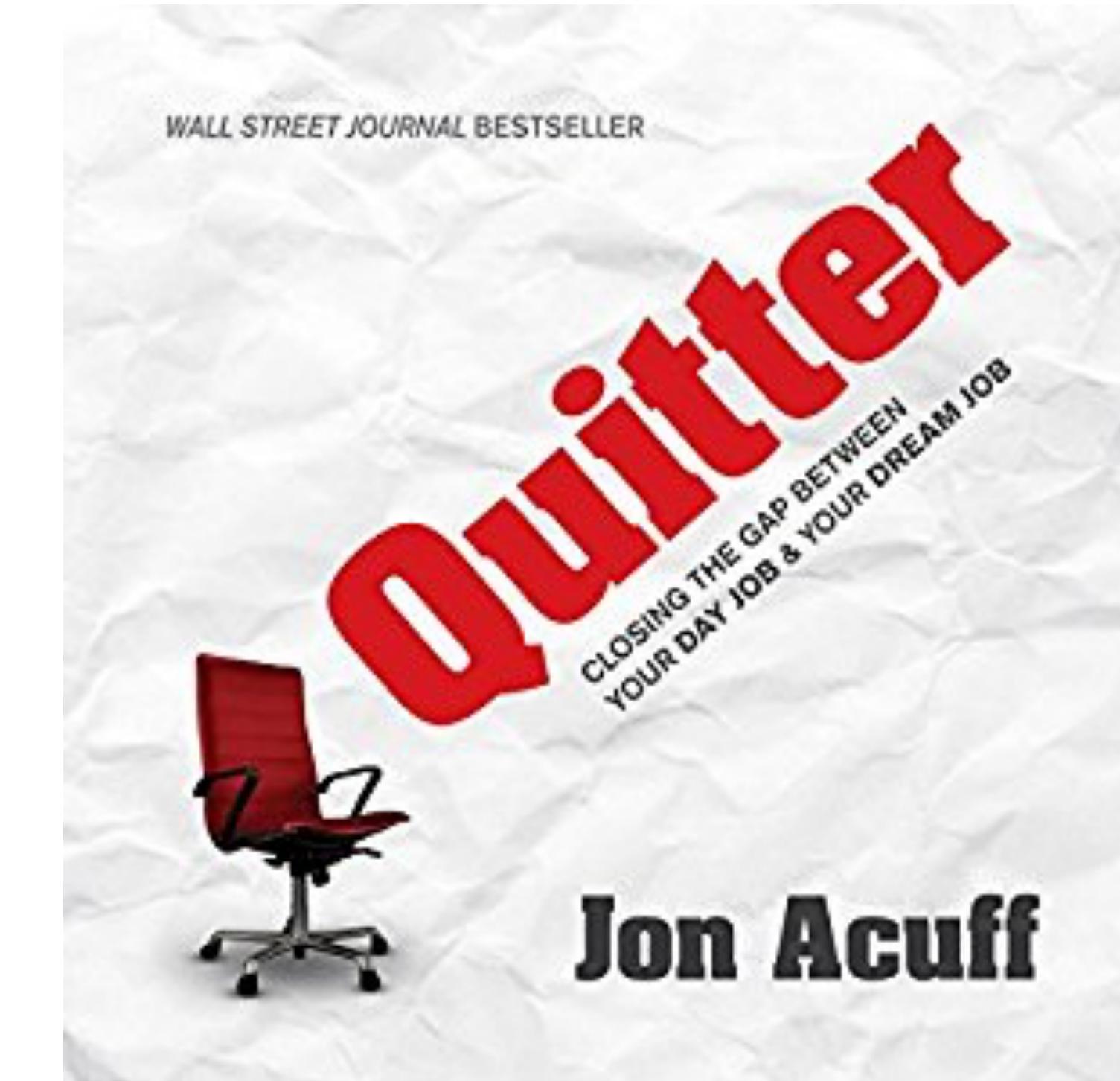
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## "Quitter" by John Acuff

*Your homework  
assignment*



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## Preparing for Success

*Things you can do to  
secure your future*



Network now  
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Your contacts are  
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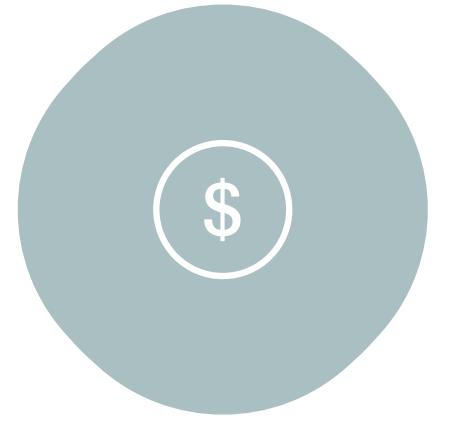
Never stop  
learning

The danger is in  
what you don't know  
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Start with clients

Have 30 hrs/wk  
minimum, for at least  
two months



Budget and save

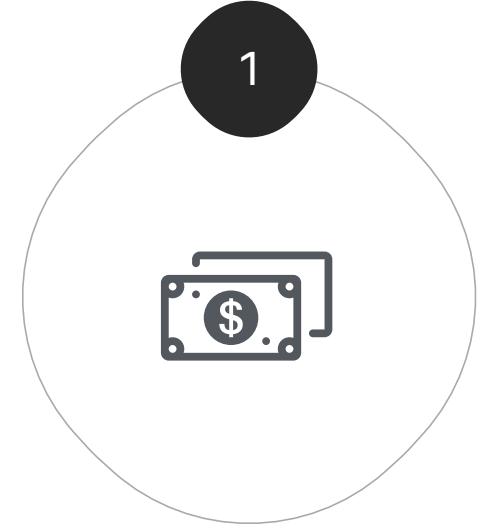
Three months  
minimum, but 6  
months is ideal

# **Everything**

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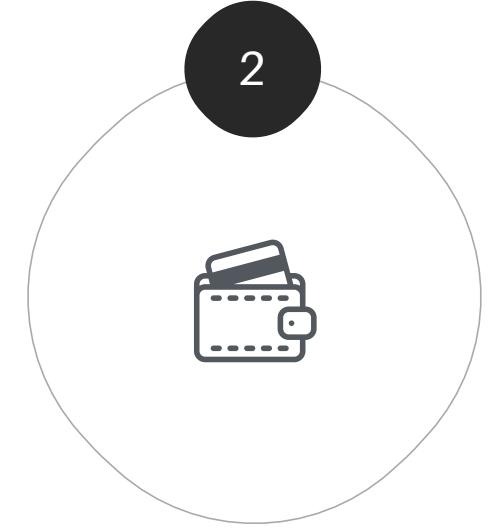
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## Budget

Budget where you can to minimize bills



## Save

Take your monthly budget, multiply by 6, save that much



## Insurance

Talk to your insurance agent and have health, life, and disability insurance lined up

# **Preparing for Success**

*Things you can do to secure your future*

# **Everything**

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A black dog with a white patch on its chest is looking at a painting of a landscape. The painting features a green tree on the left and a blue sky with clouds on the right. The dog's gaze is directed towards the painting.

**I HAVE NO IDEA  
WHAT I'M DOING**

Lessons  
I've  
learned.



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# **Everything**

*is Difficult*

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1

Divide your  
time

Two clients  
are better  
than one

# **Six years of Lessons Learned**

*More mistakes than  
successes*

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**One  
Major  
Client**

*Total income*



**Everything**  
*is Difficult*

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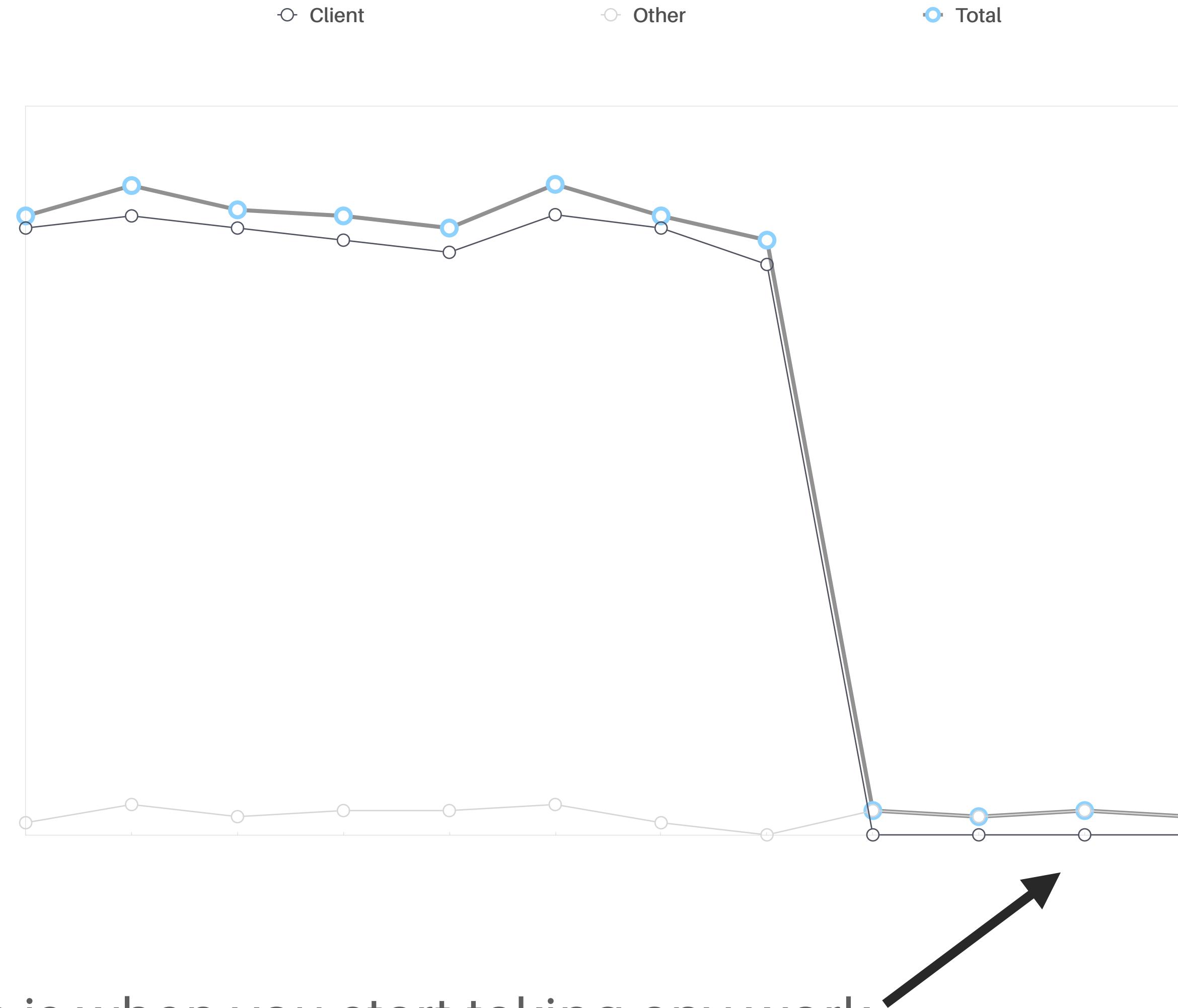


**Everything**  
*is Difficult*

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**One  
Major  
Client**

*Total income*



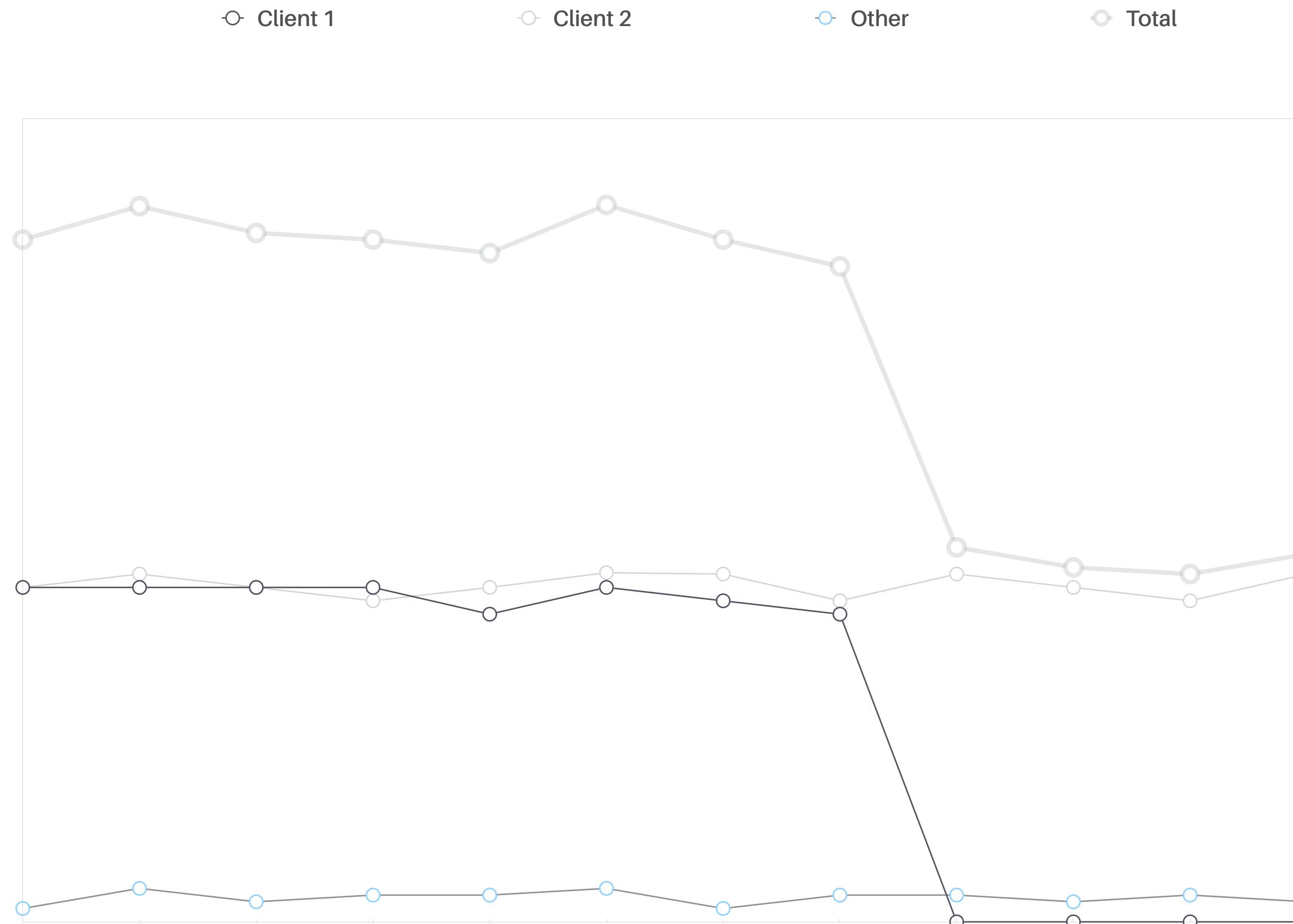
This is when you start taking any work  
you can find, even terrible work.

**Everything**  
*is Difficult*

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**Two  
Major  
Clients**

*Total income*

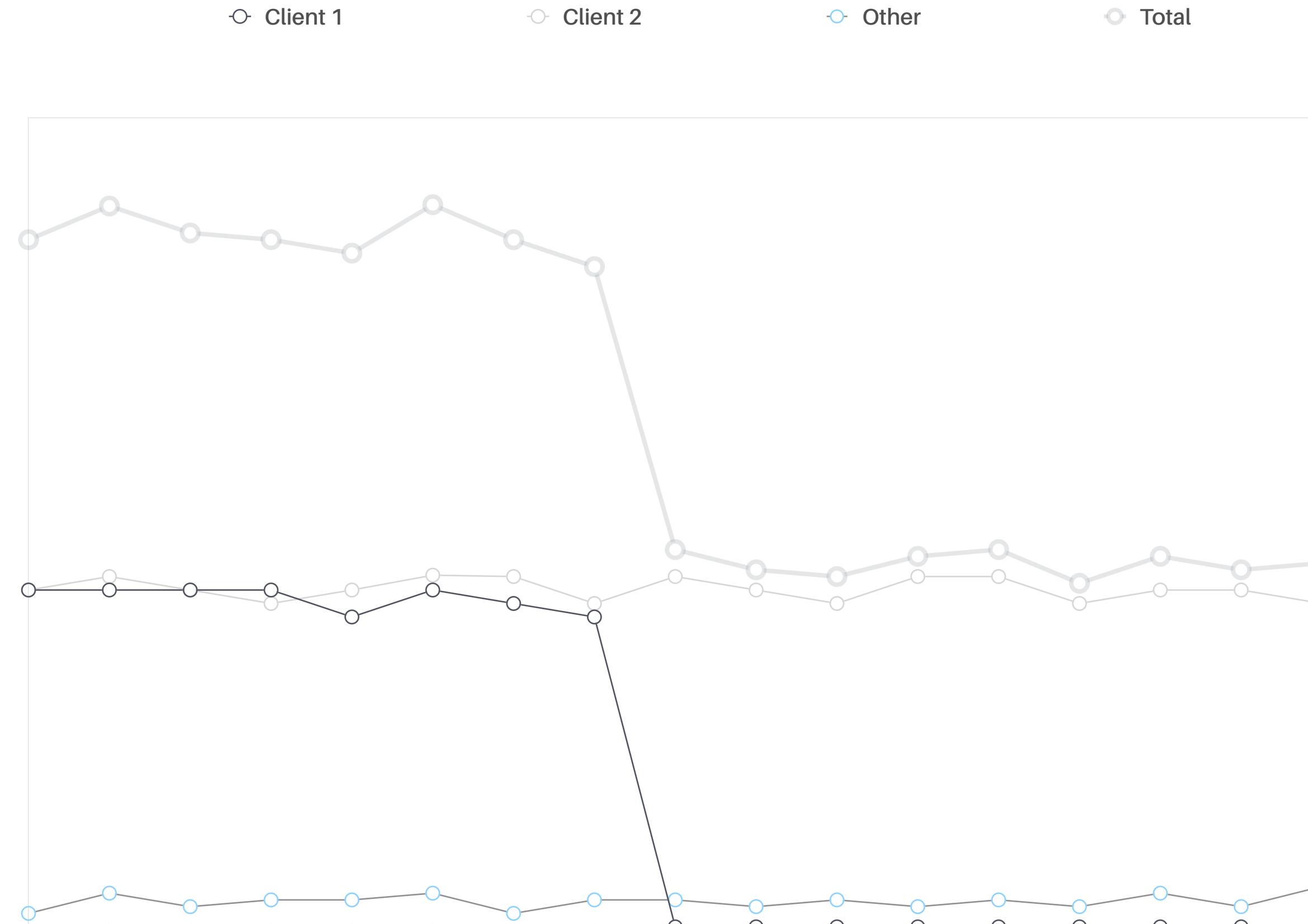


**Everything**  
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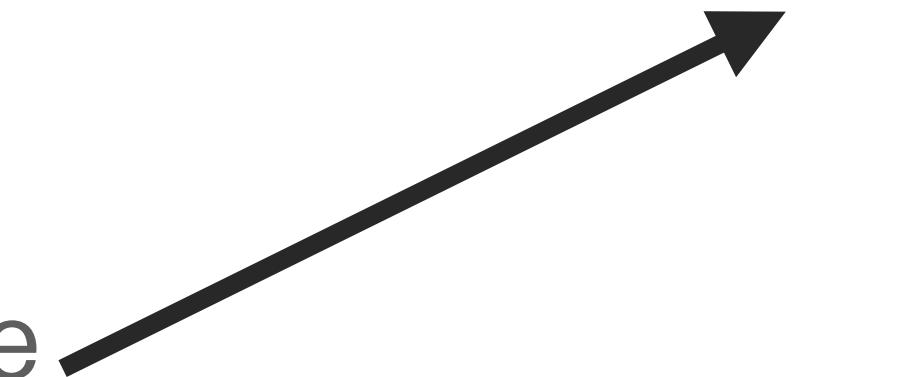
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**Two  
Major  
Clients**

*Total income*



You can probably make it to here  
before you start worrying.



# **Everything**

*is Difficult*

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1

Divide your  
time

Two clients  
are better  
than one

2

Agencies vs  
Clients

Both have  
pros and  
cons

# **Six years of Lessons Learned**

*More mistakes than  
successes*

**What's better?  
Agency or  
client work?**

**AGENCY**

- Sales process
- Consistency
- Client interaction
- Rate / Income
- Creative control
- Brand



**CLIENT**



# **Everything**

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1

Divide your  
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Two clients  
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than one

2

Agencies vs  
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Both have  
pros and  
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3

Ancillary  
activities

Unbillable  
work is  
harder than  
client work.

# **Six years of Lessons Learned**

*More mistakes than  
successes*

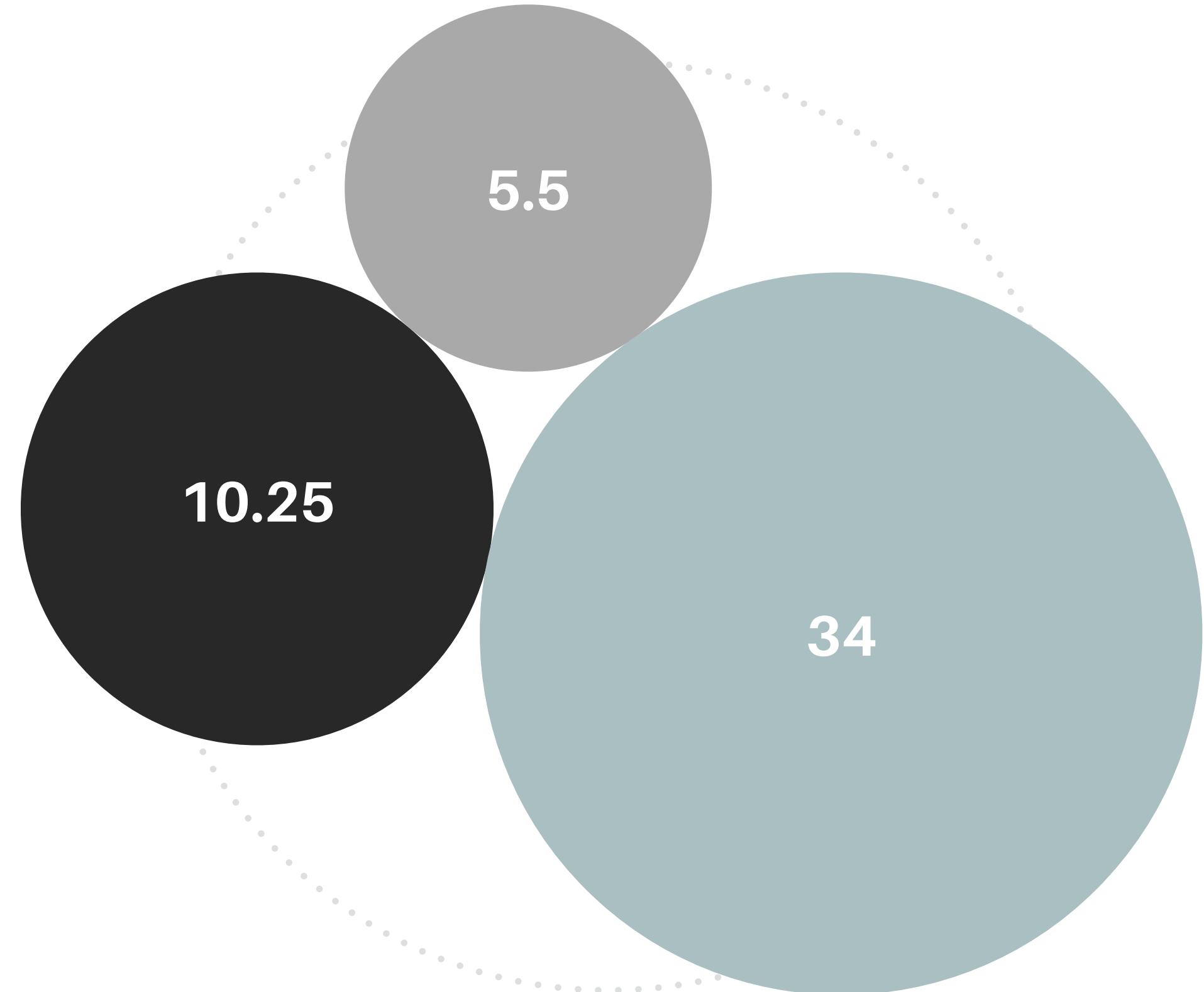
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# Weekly Hour Breakdown

*How I spend the  
average week*



**34 hours**

*Billable development*

**10.25 hours**

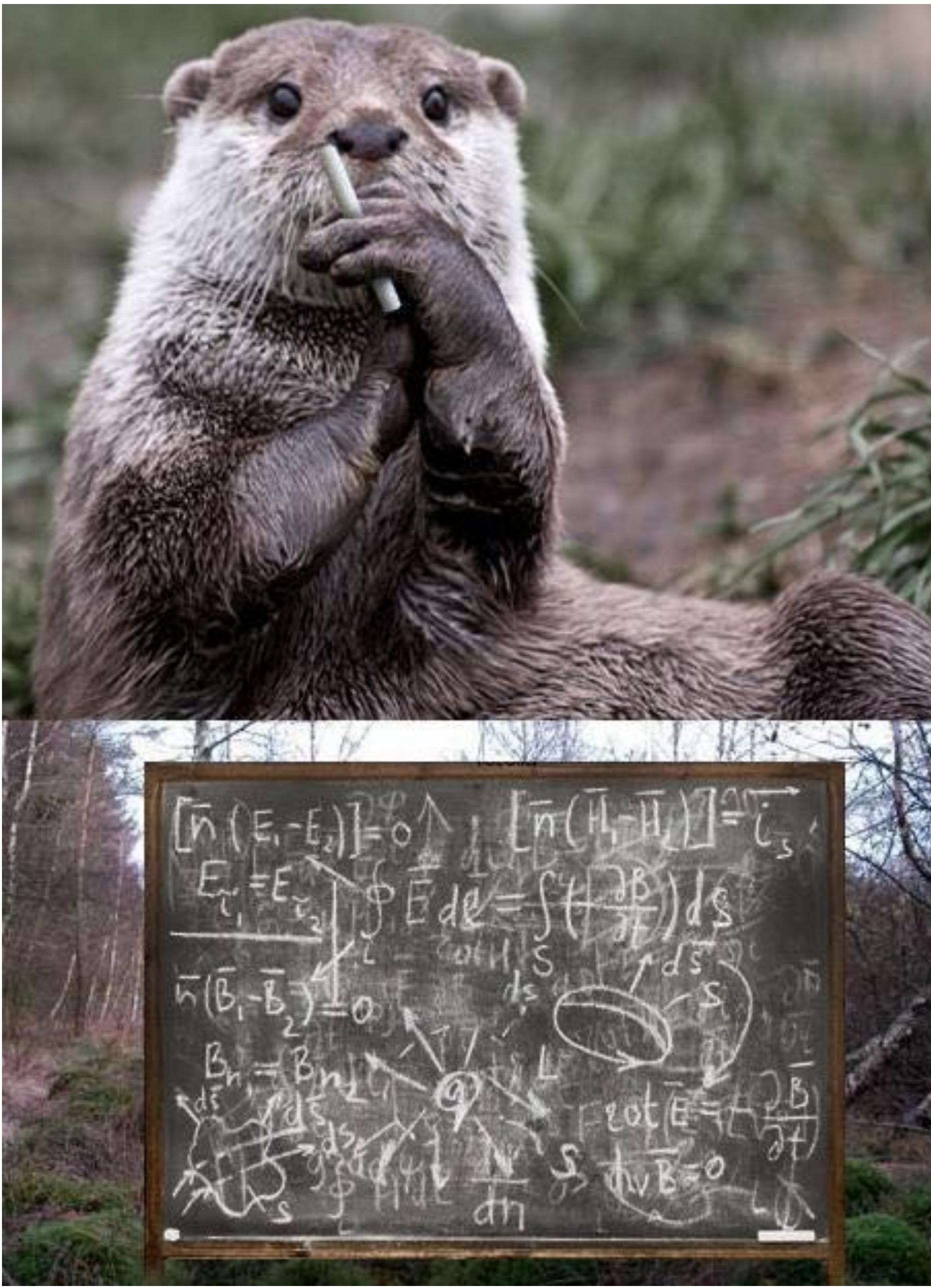
*Unbillable tasks*

**5.5 hours**

*Billable consulting work*

**49.75 hours**

*Total time spent working  
(~79% billable)*



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## **Weekly Nonbillable Tasks**

*How I spend the  
average week*

- 1 Time tracking / Invoicing
- 2 Hiring Subcontractors
- 3 Estimates / Proposals / Sales
- 4 Accounting / Taxes
- 5 Technology / Learning

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## **Six years of Lessons Learned**

*More mistakes than  
successes*

1

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time

Two clients  
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2

Agencies vs  
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Both have  
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Ancillary  
activities

Unbillable  
work is  
harder than  
client work.

4

Care for  
yourself

Nothing else  
really matters

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# **Care For Yourself**

*Nothing else  
really matters*

- Work out / Eat right
- Sleep
- Step away
- Separate work and family
- Plan time off, build in sick time

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**Office  
Space**

*Invest in yourself*





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# Office Space

*Invest in yourself*

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**Office  
Space**

*Invest in yourself*





SAD!

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**Office  
Space**

*Invest in yourself*

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**Office  
Space**

*Invest in yourself*



# Lonely is the new normal...

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Truth is, entrepreneurship is really  
damn lonely. And hard.  
I've spent countless sleepless  
nights worrying about the  
business.

*-John Meyer*

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## Six years of Lessons Learned

*More mistakes than  
successes*

1

### Divide your time

Two clients are better than one

2

### Agencies vs Clients

Both have pros and cons

3

### Ancillary activities

Unbillable work is harder than client work.

4

### Care for yourself

Nothing else really matters

5

### NDAs and NCCs

Be careful what you agree to

5

### Find your purpose

Know what you will and won't do, and why you're doing it

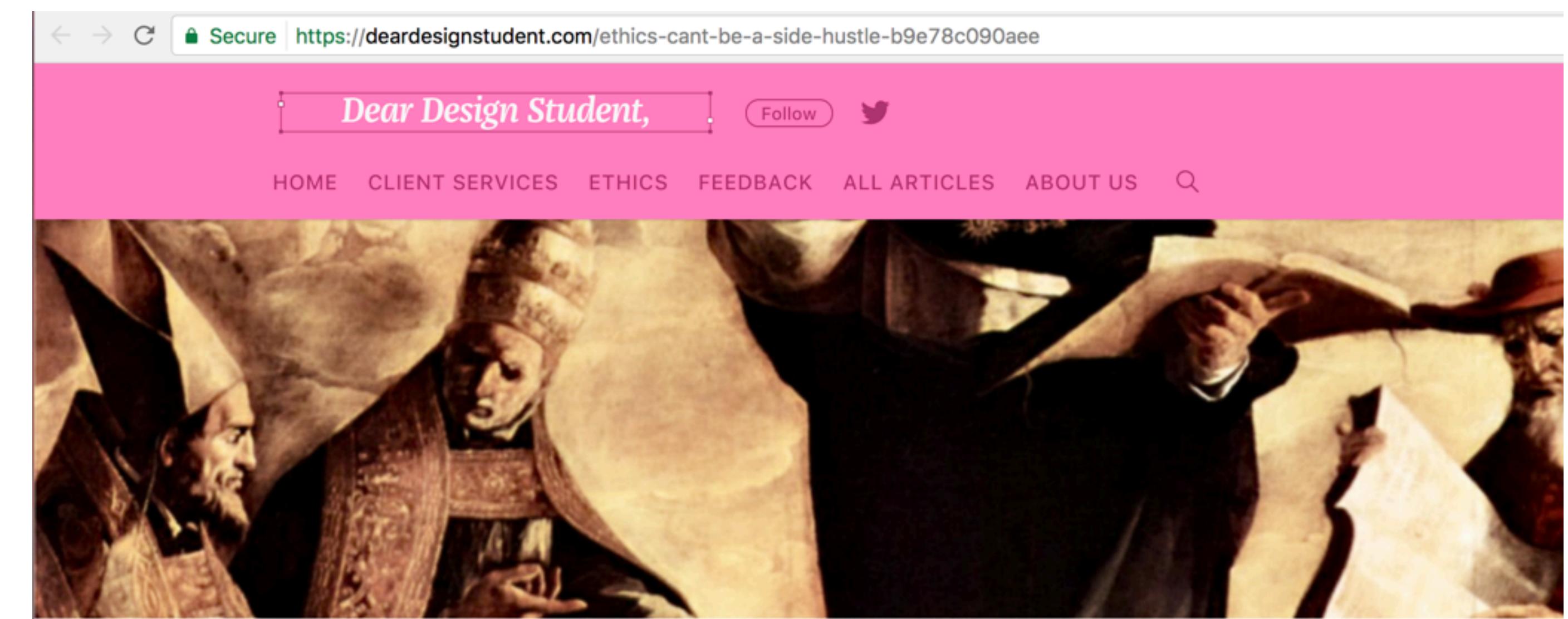
Success is not  
what you have,  
but who you are.  
- Bo Bennett

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**Do a purpose,  
not work**

*Your work should  
reflect your ethics*



Secure <https://deardesignstudent.com/ethics-cant-be-a-side-hustle-b9e78c090aee>

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St. Thomas Aquinas, the patron saint of ethical offsets, isn't having your shit.

## Ethics can't be a side hustle

In the last few months I've had a lot of designers ask me "Where can I do good work?" And they don't mean "good" as in quality. They mean good as in "on the side of the angels." They look at the world, they see a garbage fire, and they wanna help put it out. That's commendable. If there's been a shred of a silver lining lately, it's been seeing so many people rally to activism. It gives me hope.

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**Do a purpose,  
not work**

*Your work should  
reflect your ethics*

As designers, developers, engineers, or whatever you call yourself these days, you need to realize that there is an ethical component to what we do. And it's more important than ever to exercise that judgement. It's not optional. It's not something you adapt to the ethics, or lack thereof, of your employer, and it's not something you can save for a side hustle.

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**Do a purpose,  
not work**

*Your work should  
reflect your ethics*

You can't buy  
ethics offsets for  
the terrible things  
you do at your  
day job.

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