

# Working as a Freelancer



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# Working as a Freelancer



## Topics

- An introduction to freelancing
- The Job: Freelancing v Studio
- Building awareness and a Client Base
- Job Management
- Pricing
- The Start-up Business
- Spec Work
- Closing words
- Questions

# Introduction to Freelancing



# An Introduction to Freelancing



- A **freelancer** is a person who is self employed and provides goods/services to **clients for money**.
- This is also known as a '**sole trader**'.
- A sole trader must be **registered** for self-assessment in order to pay Tax, NI, Student Loan, etc.
- For some, freelancing is the **first step** in creating a small business.
- **Axis Animation** (In Glasgow) started off with 4 artists including CEO Richard Scott.
- **Outplay Entertainment** (Dundee) started by 2 ex-developers Douglas and Richard Hare.

Both companies started less than 20 years ago and now employ approximately 150 people.

- A sole trader is **not** required to own a Limited (.Ltd) company, have business accounts or be VAT registered (until you reach £85K per annum).

# An Introduction to Freelancing



- A freelancer can work under **different conditions**.
- The **common** practice and **perception** is that a freelancer works alone producing multiple jobs.

However it's worth mentioning...

- **Design agencies, game studios, TV studios and animation studios** all employ freelancers on a regular basis.
- This will require them to work **within** the studio among other employees.
- You would have heard the common phrase such as, **"I'm on a 6 month contract"**.
- This could be in reference to a **Freelance Contract** or an **Employee Contract**.
- However, **there is a great difference between the two**.

# An Introduction to Freelancing



- As a **employee** of the company you have **rights** and **entitlement**.
- Some of these are: Paid Holidays, NI Contributions, Pension, Sick Pay, Redundancy Pay (after 2 years employment).
- This is an automated system, where we can see our payslip deductions (eg Tax, NI, Student Load, Pension, etc).
- As a **Freelancer** you are paid a sum and you must complete self-assessment.
- As a freelancer the company is not obligated to regulate NI contributions, Pension, holidays, sick pay, etc. Holidays taken during contract tend to result in pro rata wage deduction.
- However, the benefits of working as a freelancer within a company is that you **cannot be contractually obligated to partake in overtime or company exclusivity**.
- Most contracts for permanent employees have **clauses** which enforce **exclusivity** and also stipulate **agreed unpaid overtime** if/when it occurs.

# An Introduction to Freelancing



Therefore the correct perception of a freelancer encompasses:

- Someone who works for themselves with their **own client base**.
- Someone who **is starting off a business venture**.
- Someone who is on contract in a studio.

***“Luckily”*** I have experience in all three.

## When are you NOT a freelancer / Sole Trader?

As soon as you **create** a limited company, you are an employee of that company, (**A Director**) and *technically* no longer a sole trader.

More on this later in this start up section.

# Freelancing v Studio Employment





# Freelancing v The Studio



## Freelancing Pros Over a Studio Position

- Freedom to work the hours which suit you. (This is beneficial if you have other commitments)
- In most cases work is produce at location of your choice.
- You choose your work.
- You can choose who you want to work with.
- Terms are negotiable for every contract, allowing for flexibility in pricing.
- Project flexibility (Could be a con if you are very specialised!)
- Final product is all your creation.
- Less chance of "Crunch Time!"
- A consistent and steady client can allow for an easy and well paid life.
- Mark-ups on external outsourced requirements (Eg. Audio/Code/Art)

## Freelancing Cons over a Studio Position

- You will have to be able to self manage work and finances. Work availability *will* fluctuate.
- Financial Insecurity can occur.
- Clients can be dreadful to deal with.
- Working out your own NI/Tax/Expenses.
- Isolation.
- Self Marketing and Promotion.
- Travelling to meetings may not turn into jobs.

# **Building Awareness and a Client Base**



# Building Awareness and a Client Base



- Clients can **initially** be hard to find. However, the right **clients talk to each other** which can be enough for reoccurring and similar work.
- (For instance, I do not have a website advertising.)
- Consider **what** form of freelance work would **appeal to you** and what is required on a **reoccurring** basis?
- The freelance Market is **different** to the studio industry so consider how wide spread you want to be.

# Building Awareness and a Client Base



So, research wisely...

- Character Design is fun but **general production** (modelling, texturing, rigging, etc) is required.
- Drawing Character Concepts are enjoyable but **Logo Design** and **Marketing** is far more reoccurring.
- Animating a single shot for 2 - 3 weeks to perfection can be fulfilling, but **motion-graphics** jobs frequently pop-up.
- First Person Shooter Game Design is exciting however, **educational interactive content** is far more common.
- Game programming AI for enemies can be satisfying for a 3<sup>rd</sup> Person adventure game. However, **gambling game production** is lucrative.

# Building Awareness and a Client Base



## Resources for Job Hunting – The initial leap.

- Job Hunting can be challenging initially. It's competitive and cut throat.
- If you don't have a starting client though, you need to find one.
- For this reason, there are outlets for beginning creative people.
- Here are some:
  - [Peopleperhour.com](https://www.peopleperhour.com)
  - [Elance.com](https://www.elance.com)
  - [Animationbase.com](https://www.animationbase.com)
- If your expertise is tailored to a specialism, [eg. Architectural Visualisation, you could Email Architect offices, Construction, Lighting Solution Companies]
- If it's hard surface modelling, then look at product companies for 3D Product Design.

# Building Awareness and a Client Base



Let's look at [www.peopleperhour.com](https://www.peopleperhour.com)

**Motion graphics / video editor:**

<https://www.peopleperhour.com/job/motion-graphics-video-editor-1846203>

<https://www.peopleperhour.com/freelancer/shubh/motion-graphics-rigging-explainer/309858>

# Building Awareness and a Client Base



## Building Awareness

- Producing the work is about  $2/3^{\text{rds}}$  of your Job. The remaining  $1/3^{\text{rd}}$  is on the **business**.
- Client bases are built on evidence of work and re-advertised as promotion.
- The business requires:
  - **Existing** client communication for the job you are producing.
  - Building client **relationships** for future work.
  - Creating greater **awareness**.
- All with the aim to produce and heighten your **presence** and **visibility**.

# Building Awareness and a Client Base



How do I build awareness on the internet?

## The Website.

- This is your **opener**, your wow-factor.
- For growth focus around the **website** and ***if*** your client base requires it, **social media**.
- Your website should be focused on advertising **you** as a **service**.
- **This is not the same as portfolio website.**
- People expect to see:  
**Company Information. Your Client Examples. Pricing Strategies. Contact Details. Past clients and testimonials.**
- People Rarely will want to see:  
How you love the new Game of Thrones episode, why your cat is better than a Terry's Chocolate Orange. Or how you hate the newest Visual Studio or Maya Update.



# Building Awareness and a Client Base



Ultimately, knowing your client defines your website.

If you're selling **comics**, then your website design should reflect the **recreational**.

If you're producing **product design**, your website should **clean** and **modern**.

If you're producing **games**, then your website should focus around **engagement** and **interactivity**.

- Have a personalised website URL, make sure it is something you are pleased to keep for years to come.
- And be careful... '**Powergen italia.com**'

# Building Awareness and a Client Base



- Your growth can depend on your trail.
- A trail is your **social media marketing strategy**.

Some of you do this already...

- Have a plan for **engagement**.
- Think clearly about how and where you want **people to go**.

To your website? To Facebook? To IndieDB? To YouTube? To Artstation? To Linked in.

**How do they get there?**



# Building Awareness and a Client Base



## Design the trail.

- Design it for the person who does **not** understand the internet, make it '**idiot proof**'.
- Do not make people click 3 times to get to a gallery.
- Do not make them scroll to get to a 'quote form'.
- If you have a gallery of client work at the bottom of that page do you have "Get a quote for your Game/Animation". Does that cycle to the quote form?
- Think about the client experience, what would you search?

# Building Awareness and a Client Base



Question:

You've made a game. Where does your trail lead to?

**The Purchase Marketplace**

Question:

You're advertising your availability to make games. Where does your trail lead to?

**Your Website with a clear contact form**

Question:

You want to have full time employment as a 3D artist in a studio. Where does your trail lead to?

**Artstation portfolio website or Clear Personalised Website with an email.**

Question:

You want to create concept art for clients.

**Your Client Website with a clear quote/contact form.**

It sounds simple, but even the most clear of trails can confuse a client or studio.

So for instance all links and placement on Website, Facebook, Linked in, Twitter, Instagram Profile are all **focused on the priority Goal.**

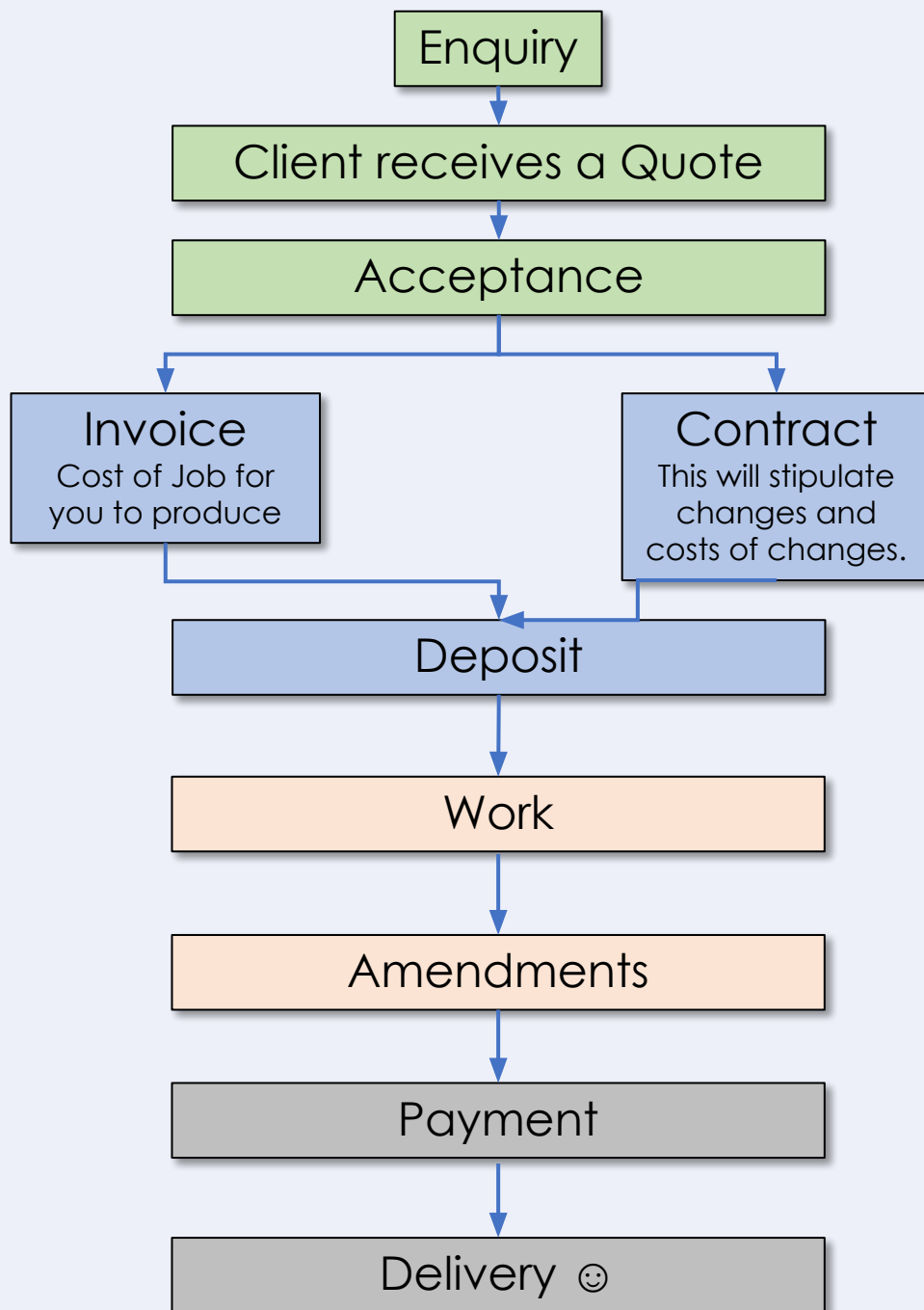
# Job Management



# Job Management



- Let's take a look at Job Management with a possible strategy if you were working for yourself.
- Freelancing is a *building* process.
- When producing work for clients, you might want to consider starting **small** and **working up**.
- However, do not start too small...you must make a return and profit. (We'll cover this when we talk pricing).
- Here is a possible strategy for freelancing.



An enquiry is placed, asking if you are capable and cost. Send a quote covering the hours you estimate.

You may need to also add overheads, eg (a job required me to build a PC to make the deadline for rendering). Also, consider things you do not do. Eg. Voice acting, etc.

If agreed then send them an invoice and a contract. This defines the number of changes, cost and deliverable estimate.

Take a deposit unless you have complete confidence the client will pay.

Work and update client to reduce surprise changes. Keep a log of all work produced, and hours spent.

Keep cost of all outgoings eg. Music, VO, etc. Produce any amendments. At cost or per contract terms.

Give low resolution or bold watermarked proof.

If no changes are required then ask for payment. Delivery of final product.

You may want to ask for feedback.

# Job Management



## Why you need a contract.

- A contract is a legal document which both parties agree to. People who pay for work are used to contracts.
- Without a contract a client can walk away at any time and not pay for any work done.
- They show that you are professional and are serious about the work.
- The contract covers both your client and you. Deposits should be non-refundable.

## Why you need an invoice.

- An invoice is a document which is required to pay you. Most companies cannot process payment without an invoice.
- Invoices are proof of company / client expenditure which they and you require for taxation.



# Job Management



## Hour Logging

- Time worked allows you to decipher how long jobs of a similar nature will take you.
- Hour logs give a true representation of work duration.
- They are also required in some invoices (if the invoice is given at the end and needs a breakdown).

P17										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Hours Log Book									
2	Date	Day	Start	Stop	Daily Total		Total Hrs		Workflow Stage	
3										
4	02/12/2015	Wednesday	1:00 PM	6:30 PM	5.5		24.50		Modelling (Clay)	
5	04/12/2015	Friday	1:00 PM	5:30 PM	4.5				Modelling (Clay)	
6	06/12/2015	Sunday	2:00 PM	6:00 PM	4				Modelling (Clay)	
7	08/12/2015	Tuesday	11:00 AM	1:00 PM	2				Alterations / Lighting	
8	09/12/2015	Wednesday	11:00 AM	2:00 PM	3				Modelling / Texturing	
9			6:30 PM	9:30 PM	3				Modelling / Texturing / Lighting	
10	14/12/2015	Monday	4:00 PM	6:30 PM	2.5				Modelling	
11					0					
12					0					
13					0					
14					0					
15					0					
16					0					
17					0					
18					0					
19					0					
20					0					

# Job Management



## Organisation

- No matter the job you are required to self manage and task manage.
- Track Jobs and the stage they are at.
- Track Invoices, Receipts and expenditure.
- Keep Log Books
- Back up incrementally – your file will corrupt.
- Use Systems designed for task management (Trello).
- Reiterate a clients wishes in emails. Make sure plans and requirements given are up to date and the newest version. (Ive had DGN's and Scripts be old versions).
- Make sure your clients are 100% on board with any creative liberties you are adding. Never assume.

# Job Management



Trello:

The screenshot displays a Trello board named 'C3\_Dev' with a blue header. The board is organized into several vertical lists, each representing a different stage or category of work:

- CORE WORK - Shared Tasks:** Includes cards for 'ECHO LAKE - Roadmap', 'ASTRONOMER (1.0) Features', 'ASTRONAUT (2.0) Features', 'ONGOING - Friend Fish Redesign', 'ONGOING - New Fish Animations', 'ONGOING - Cleanup Story Doc', 'ONGOING - Story and Backstory', and 'ONGOING - Rough Preconceptual Animations'.
- CORE WORK - Completed:** Lists completed tasks such as 'STEAM - Winter Sale 2017', 'STEAM Winter Sale Trailer 2017', 'STEAM - Winter Sale 2017 - Rocket v2', 'STEAM - Winter Sale 2017 - Environment & Pickup Designs', 'STEAM - Summer Sale 2017', 'STEAM - Summer Sale 2017 Audio Tasks', 'POLISH - SFX + Manager Improvements', 'ONGOING - Launch Marketing (Wrapup)', 'JANUARY - ASTRONOMER - Demo 4 of 4 (Early Access Release)', 'JANUARY - ECHO LAKE - Proboards Forum Polish Work', 'JANUARY - ASTRONOMER - Feature Sheet', and 'JANUARY - ECHO LAKE - Launch Banner'.
- CORE WORK - Clive:** Contains cards for 'ASTRONOMER - Alpha 1.2 Feedback (Mementos and Beyond)', 'ASTRONOMER - Alpha 1.0 to 1.1, Feedback (Launch, Creations)', 'ASTRONOMER - Difficulty Balancing', 'POLISH - Improvements - Saving', 'POLISH - Improvements - Adventure', 'POLISH - Improvements - Ambience', 'POLISH - Improvements - Boat', 'POLISH - Improvements - Credits', 'POLISH - Improvements - Curve', 'POLISH - Improvements - Finale', 'POLISH - Improvements - Friend', 'POLISH - Improvements - Layout', 'POLISH - Improvements - Ripples', and 'POLISH - Improvements - Puzzle'.
- CORE WORK - Jon:** Lists tasks like 'ASTRONOMER - Biome Prototypes', 'ASTRONOMER - Art Requests', 'ASTRONAUT - Game World Sizings', 'POLISH - Additional BG Details', 'POLISH - Pickups - Additional GFX', and 'ONGOING - Mom's Backstory'.
- CORE WORK - Peter:** Includes 'ASTRONOMER - Audio Requests', 'ASTRONOMER - Animation Requests', 'ALL MODES - Animation Replacements (Lightable)', 'POLISH - Portal Appearance', 'POLISH (PlayExpo Feedback) - Revised Boat + Ripple Art', 'POLISH - Additional Audio', 'POLISH - Final Puzzle - Placeholder Music', and 'POLISH - Random boat sounds (collision)'.
- Research And Inspiration:** Features cards for 'Beta (July Work) - Chapter Suggestions/References', 'Populating Scene Ideas', 'Existing Games - Inspiration (Vis/Aud/Gameplay)', 'Environmental Ideas for...', and 'Inspiration Ideas for the...'.

On the right side of the board, there is a 'Menu' panel with options like 'Invite...', 'Change Background', 'Filter Cards', 'Power-Ups', 'Stickers', and 'More'. Below the menu, the 'Activity' section shows recent updates, including 'Peter Satera on ASTRONAUT (2.0) Features' and 'Clive Lawrence on ASTRONAUT (2.0) Features'.

# Pricing



# Pricing



## Pricing

- Pricing comes with experience - the quicker/better/experienced you are, the higher the cost.
- If you are going to charge per hour then consider how much you would cost in a studio position. Look at competitors salary websites and **peopleperhour.com**
- Visit [www.wageindicator.co.uk](http://www.wageindicator.co.uk)

From giving it an annual wage, hours per day and days per week then:

- |                 |                   |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Annual:</b>  | <b>£24,000.00</b> | <b>Annual:</b>  | <b>£24,960.00</b> |
| <b>Monthly:</b> | <b>£2,000.00</b>  | <b>Monthly:</b> | <b>£2,080.00</b>  |
| <b>Weekly:</b>  | <b>£461.54</b>    | <b>Weekly:</b>  | <b>£480.00</b>    |
| <b>Daily:</b>   | <b>£92.31</b>     | <b>Daily:</b>   | <b>£96.00</b>     |
| <b>Hourly:</b>  | <b>£11.54</b>     | <b>Hourly:</b>  | <b>£12.00</b>     |
- pricing of your products, they will also tell each other how much things cost them. So be careful giving 'low rates'.

# Pricing



## Pricing

- Pricing is **not** simple, and one of the greatest fears of new freelancers. Here are some tips:
- Make your rates competitive. See what others are charging. Keep in mind those who are located in cities like London will charge more for cost of living.
- Create financial headroom for additional changes, costs and profit (you're not in this to break even.)
- Your time is worth the money. You trained for this. A job may take you 2 hours. But it took you 4 years of training to make it in 2 hours.
- Low rates will **damage** you and the industry. Do not be reduced to nothing! (eg Fiverr.com)
- Equally, very high rates will **damage** you. Clients will not return.
- Be aware of international costs, especially right now due to the pound. When your currency is strong and theirs is weak it can create a shock to the client. However, If the pound is not strong, then you might be able to increase costs to match international costs.

# Pricing



## Per Hour. Per Day. Per Month. Per Job.

- No matter the job or payment method the same question is ultimately the same “How long” as that will indicate the price.
- Think carefully about your pricing plan.
- Charging **per hour** is good for **time taken**. (Good when the client requests changes).
- Charging **per day** is good for full **day usage**. (Great for rounding up, and also including consultation and emailing, etc).
- Charging **per job** is great for what the **job is worth**. (This means the clients usage and company is taken into account) - I use this method.

# The Start-Up!





# The Start-Up



We'll briefly cover the start-up.

- Beyond the freelancer you may consider starting a business, but if you are a **single person**, it is best to **maintain as a sole trader**.
- A Limited business will **also** require you to do Taxation for your company.
- Companies that are **2 people, more or indie dev's** that have balanced weight must have a company account and **shares distributed**.
- Payment transactions in and out these accounts need **legally appointed Directors**, and **account owners**.
- Directors are legally obligated to maintain the companies finances.  
Eg. **Bank Account Monthly Fee**  
**Bank Account Transaction Fee**  
**Yearly Company Transaction**  
**Tax, etc**
- This requirement can occur when small indies or animator groups go for **funding, loans** or **grants**.

# The Start-Up



## A Start-up Company

- **Employ** and contract people.
- Gain **Grants, loans** and **funds** for projects.  
Grants such as UK Games Fund, Arts Trust Scotland (There's also an England fund), Creative Scotland, etc.
- Go to start up business **events** and receive **business aid**.  
Prince's Trust Scotland, Business Gateway, Regional Growth Fund, Scottish Enterprise, etc.
- Should be aware that some start-up services require the funding to be **repaid**.
- In some cases you will have to **prove your company is in profit** to gain funding. Otherwise a **Loan** is the only possible solution.
- Close the company declaring bankruptcy **securing personal finances**.

# Spec Work



# Spec work



**Spec work** is short for 'Speculative Work / Free pitching'.

- This is when jobs are expected to be **finished** or the client wants to see **examples before** a piece is **agreed** upon.
- Spec work are **guised** as a **contest** or an **entry exam** on jobs to **"Test"** the creators skill.
- Creatives lose their rights when agreeing to this as no safeguards can be put in place, potentially producing free work. **Your portfolio is proof of ability.**
- Do not be taken advantage of if your begin freelancing. **You don't test a coffee before you buy it.**

# Spec work



- Pro Bono work is similar, except the client asks you **voluntarily produce for free**.
- But remember what was said. “Clients communicate”, if your fee is £0 to begin with, that job potentially **could have no end** and have some **severe implications** of your **worth**.
- Bad clients can work on **false promises**. They are entrepreneurs trying to expand their business without **bloating their expenses**.
- So... just be aware of it.

# Closing Words



# Closing Words



- Self Employment can sound scary but setting up as a **sole trader** is as simple as setting up a social media account.
- There is **no debt** unless you make the decision that you want a loan.
- You can cancel your sole trader account **at any time**.
- You don't need to quit your day job. Self-employment can be as **small** or as **large** as you **want**.
- Since there is no risk the only thing that may hold you back is **imposter syndrome**, which yes...is a common thing among creative freelancers.
- Simply keep an **eye out** for those that **want freebies**...You've all worked too long and hard to get told you should work for nothing.

# Closing Words



- The challenge is developing the client base to keep work coming in at a constant level to make it a full time job.
- So if a chance comes up or if you are interested **then go for it!**



# Questions?

