

10 Truths Learned From A Career Of Freelancing

Lessons learned over 7 years of contracting

First... About Me - My name is Samuel Levy

I am a:

Software Developer

Digital Nomad

Freelancer

Computer Guy

Nerd

1998: First program

2002: First website

2004: University

2006: Started getting paid

2011: Started Freelancing

2015: Started Company

2018: Still going...



My First Office



My Current Office



Let's talk about Freelancing

Truth #1: Freelancers are cheaper than employees

Employees:

- Cost 2-3x their salary
- Keep costing money when they're not working
- Aren't feasible if you only need a small amount of work

Freelancers:

- Only cost their rate
- Stop costing you money when they stop working
- Are available for small jobs, and on demand



Tips:

Businesses:

Use freelancers to add capability

Consider the costs of hiring -
freelancers will almost always be
cheaper

Remember: They're adding value to
your business

Freelancers:

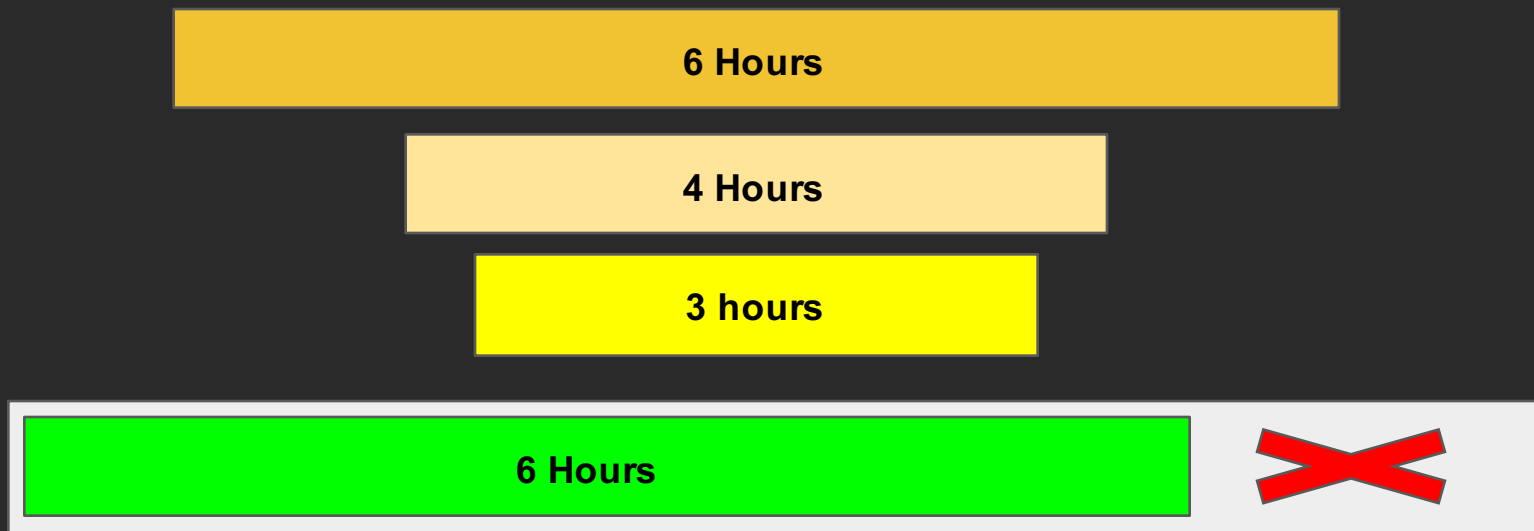
Your starting rate should start at 2-3x
your "employed" wage

You can't bill full time hours, so the
hours you *can* bill must cover the ones
you can't

Try to bill enough to pay yourself a
salary, including superannuation



Truth #2: A 6 hour task will cost you the whole day



Tips:

**CHARGE
A
DAY
RATE**



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Truth #3: You're a business, not an employee



Negotiation is fine, but
you cannot dictate a
freelancer's terms

Truth #4: Unreasonable requests deserve unreasonable rates

ATTENTION!

Lack of

prior planning

on your part,
does not constitute an

emergency

on our part.



Tips:

Freelancers:

- Set business hours, and charge a premium for work outside those hours
- Implement an “emergency” / “priority” rate to compensate you for the extra time you have to spend to catch up on other projects

Businesses:

- Try to plan ahead
- Give 1-2 weeks lead time for changes you know are coming
- Feel happy that your tasks won't be dropped because someone else was bad at planning



Truth #5: You have to make time for downtime

If you hustle too much, your brain will fall out.

Burnout is real, and can cost you hours, days, or weeks of work.

You can't produce good work if you're not taking care of yourself.

**There will be times when there's no work, and times
when there's too much work.**

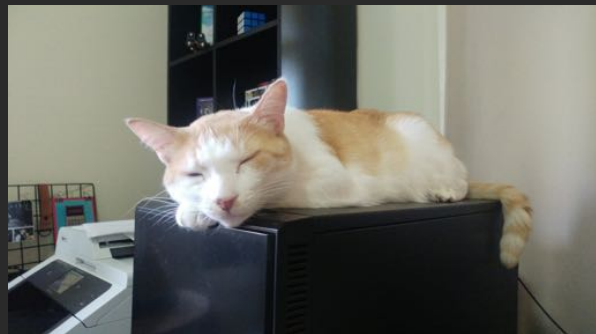
If you don't accept the former, you won't handle the latter.

Tips:

- Plan for 2-4 weeks off each year, bill accordingly
- Make a schedule, and *stick to it*
- Find a hobby that doesn't resemble work
- Use slow periods to learn and do housekeeping
- ***Relax.***



Intermission



Schrödinger

Spiny



Norman

Scotty



Truth #6: You have to be honest, up-front, and candid



The *worst* time for a client to find out about a delay is after the due date.

The second worst time is the day before it's due.



Truth #7: Hungry doesn't mean desperate

Some contracts are just trouble

Some projects are just doomed. Some clients won't listen to good advice.

Don't ignore red flags

If something seems off, move on. There'll be someone else. Time spent chasing invoices is time that you're not doing anything productive or billable.

“No client” is *a/ways* better than a “bad client”

Truth #8: If you can't do it, somebody else will (and that's OK)

Know your limits

A project isn't the time to experiment - learn in your free time; bill what you know.

Outsource is *not* a dirty word

You *are* outsourcing. Sub-contract others to fill gaps in your skill and knowledge.

Truth #9: Your project is more important to you than your client

Every business owner is focused on running their business

Their business is selling widgets. Your business is making websites.

Be proactive about keeping the project moving

Your job includes managing the client. Don't harass them, but make it clear what you need. Clients *will* get distracted by their own business. Keep them on track.

The only time that the client cares more than you is when it's
COSTING THEM MONEY

Truth #10: Freelancing isn't free

Watch out for the following:

- It'll be great exposure!
- You'll get equity!
- We're a charity!
- I'll pay you after we make money!
- You're my son!
- You're my Neighbour's friends grandson!
- My Nephew could have done it!
- WordPress is free!



Tips:

- Be upfront about your prices and other costs.
- Sell by the value of results rather than the path it takes to get there.
- Remember that “Free” products are there to *reduce* costs, but still take time.
- Don't be afraid to walk away from a bad deal.
- If you're *really* desperate to give away free work, contribute to WordPress or other Open Source projects.

Questions, comments,
praise, abuse?

Thanks for listening.



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Helpful links for freelancers

Rate calculators:

- <https://whatismydayrate.com/>
- <https://www.finder.com.au/hourly-rate-calculator>
- <https://hourlyrate.beewits.com/>

Support:

- <https://www.reddit.com/r/freelance/>
- <https://digitalfreelancer.io/chat/>
- <https://www.reddit.com/r/digitalnomad/>
- Mike Monterio - “F#@% you, pay me”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVklVRt6c1U>

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- <https://blog.samuellevy.com/>

This talk was originally a post on Reddit, which turned into a blog, which turned into a lot of discussion, and people asking me to create a talk.

