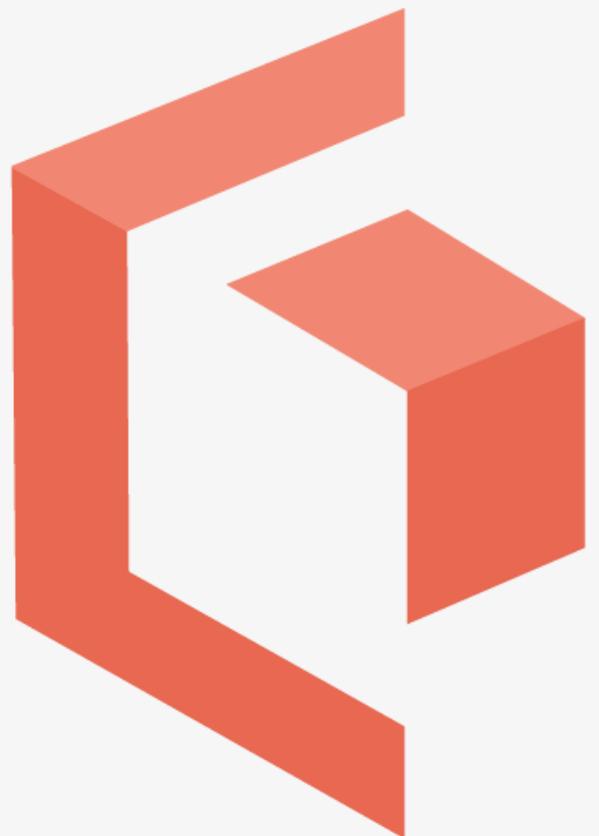




Guide to Building a Successful Freelance Career

By the CareerGig Team | November 2020



Contents

Introduction	3
Part 1: Understand the Freelance Career Trifecta	4
Part 2: Define your brand	5
Part 3: Know the rules	7
Part 4: Embrace sales and marketing	9
Part 5: Get Organized	12
Part 6: Create a safety net	16
About CareerGig	17

Introduction

Hi there and welcome to our guide to a successful Freelance Career!

We're big believers in the flexibility and independence that a Freelance Career offers. Rather than being tied to a single employer, or sometimes a single type of work, those who embrace Freelance Careers get to experience the best of what they love, and have the freedom to work more or less as they are able.

With this increased freedom comes an increased responsibility to make sure that you continue to thrive throughout your career. This requires you to think through everything from what you're doing, how you're doing it, what happens if the unexpected happens, and how to you build a sustainable pipeline of gigs to support you into the future.

What follows is our guide to building a successful Freelance Career. Depending on what you choose to do, some of our recommendations may not apply to some of all of the types of gigs you prefer. But overall, we think there is helpful advice for everyone here.

Let's get started!

Part 1:

Understand the Freelance Career Trifecta:

The first thing to consider is the type of work that you can not only do well, but make money doing. This means more than simply being capable, or making people happy doing it. In order to be truly successful as a freelancer, you need to master what I call the Freelance Career Trifecta:

- **Skill:** Do something where you can achieve consistently great results
- **Satisfaction:** Do something that you can be passionate about, and that makes you happy when you are able to complete it.
- **Speed:** Do something that you can repeatedly complete in an efficient and quality manner



Why does it take all three to be successful? Because, if you don't know this already, having a Freelance Career can be difficult, time-consuming, and it often requires you to depend on yourself to do things you've never done before. Many find overcoming these challenges to be incredibly rewarding in themselves. However, over time, if you don't have all of the above, it's possible that you can get burned out, discouraged, or simply not find the enjoyment you once did.

By understanding and embracing something that: a) allows you to utilize your skills, b) work that you get true satisfaction from performing, and c) types of tasks that you can do with the speed that will allow you to complete projects and work on-time and/or ahead of schedule, you will start to become very successful in your Freelance Career.

Part 2:

Define your brand

Having a great personal brand is helpful regardless of what type of work you do, be it full-time employment or self-employment. It helps you stand out from others as they are making often tough choices about how to work with.

A personal brand also helps set expectations from the beginning of a relationship with those you work with.

Keep in mind that there are consultants who do nothing but work with people on their personal brands, so we can't possibly get into the type of depth that they can get into with you here. Let's at least explore a few aspects of what a personal brand consists of, however.



Premium or basic?

Don't be mistaken, in this case there is absolutely nothing wrong with being "basic." Lots of companies need quality, dependable services performed at a reasonable price. The trick here is to decide what you want to focus on.

If you are providing services that can be delivered quickly and inexpensively, your value proposition to the buyer might be that you can deliver things that are repeatable and reasonable to afford.

If, however, you are providing services that take more time to create, your value proposition to the buyer might instead be that you are offering something premium that takes both time and a higher cost point to provide.

Understanding your value proposition here is going to be critical to how you position yourself when first talking with a prospective buyer.

Are you "we" or "me"?

The next thing to think through is how you want to present yourself. Do you refer to yourself in the singular: I, me, myself; or do you think of yourself as part of a team: we

You should also consider how transparent you want any networks of other providers you work with to be. For instance, the practice of “white labeling” other providers to appear as if they’re part of your team is commonplace.

Just keep in mind, however, that some services are easier to white label than others. The other thing to keep in mind is that the more you dilute your core service offerings, your customers might start to get the feeling your a jack of all trades, master of none. Not necessarily a bad thing, but it needs to be in line with your personal brand.

Full-service or specialist?

Finally, you should decide how comprehensive your services will be. Are you a specialist, who is expert at a smaller set of tasks that require a particular skill or experience? Or, are you a generalist, who can take care of a customer’s problem and solve it, soup to nuts.

It’s important to remember that choosing one of these over the other may not necessarily determine how much money you make. It might seem logical to assume that a full-service consultant, but remember that highly specialized skills can be in demand and also demand a high hourly or project fee.

Part 3:

Know the rules

Let's get practical for a bit now. While there are many benefits and freedoms available to freelancers and gig workers, there are a lot of things that you need to know in order to be financially successful. While this guide can only scratch the surface on these, here are a few things that you need to know more about, and potentially hire an expert to help you with:

Taxes

As a full-time employee in the United States, you most likely got a W-2 form for your taxes. This included not only the amount you were paid as a salary, but also withholdings for your taxes, social security, and a few other things.



With great freedom comes great responsibility! When you are a freelancer or self employed, there is no one to withhold taxes for you, or put money away to pay your taxes. Instead, you will most likely receive a 1099 tax form from anyone you did business with that year (they are generally due at the end of January the following year), and it is up to you to do the following:

- Collect all the 1099s from your freelance employers
- Save money that will help you afford your tax payments (since no one will be withholding money for you)
- (In most cases) Pay quarterly estimated taxes based on what you anticipate earning

Our recommendation is to talk with a tax advisor to learn more and understand what is required and what you should be planning ahead for.

Insurance

As a full-time employee, you don't need to worry about providing insurance for any work that you perform. As a freelancer, contractor, or self employed individual, however, you may be liable for the work you perform. It is important to both understand what is required when you sign a contract, as well as to anticipate needs, as it can sometimes take a little while to get set up with things like Errors and Omissions (E&O) insurance and other things. There might also be

specific types of insurance necessary for the work you do, like for instance, if you are a driver you might need a specific type of vehicle insurance.

The best thing to do is talk with someone about business insurance and where you might be liable.

Contracts

There are several legal areas that you should make sure you are aware of in regards to your Freelance Career, but contracts are a really good starting point. You should have a contract for services and a non disclosure/non compete agreement of your own that you can easily provide to companies you work with.

In general, it is good to have a responsive lawyer that can answer your questions quickly and easily. These lawyers don't have to charge exorbitant fees to be good, but make sure you have someone you can trust, and that understands the needs of a freelancer or self employed individual. This will make things go more quickly, save money, and give you the confidence you need that your legal needs are covered..

Part 4:

Embrace sales and marketing

There's no getting around it, if you're going to have a successful Freelance Career, you're going to have to embrace selling and marketing your services. While this may come naturally to some, it's not always everyone's strong suit.

Fortunately, not everyone has to be what they consider a stereotypical "sales type" in order to be successful. There are many ways to earn people's trust and get them to hire you.



Networking

One thing is certain: to be truly successful in a Freelance Career, you need to build your network. All the people you talk to and meet on a daily or weekly basis could be the key to you getting steady gig work. Even if they're not in the position to hire anyone, they could easily recommend you or provide you with helpful information and tips if they know what type of work you're looking for.

Not an extrovert? You don't need to do all or most of your networking in person if that doesn't work well for you.

There are lots of websites (including CareerGig) that offer job listings and ways to network with other individuals. While this doesn't provide as personal or direct a way to network, you can use things like portfolio features or reviews and ratings to stand out.

LinkedIn is also an incredibly helpful place for contractors and employers to meet, discuss mutual topics, and learn about opportunities in a setting that is more professional than other social networks.

Thought Leadership

Let's revisit your personal brand again. Based on your approach to winning new business, think about how you might explain what you do to others. Now, you can do that, and reach a larger potential audience by writing about it on your own blog or other existing platforms like Medium, making short videos, even making a podcast.

Thought leadership means that you find a way to talk in a meaningful, valuable way about your expertise that helps others learn more, approach things in a better way, or better understand how you can help them. All of these things help connect you more easily with potential gigs, and the more you are regarded as a thought leader, the more (and more high paying) opportunities may present themselves to you.

Be Realistic

If constantly selling and following up on leads is not for you, try to focus your efforts on getting longer gigs and bigger ones that have you do more time working and less time marketing your services. This might mean you have less concurrent work coming in, but it may also suit your lifestyle better.

It's important to be realistic with what you think you can reasonably both sell and deliver. Doing this will help you budget accordingly and figure out the best types of jobs that will work the best for you.

Offer Value

We've all seen advertisements that we either quickly skip past, or wonder why in the world they were even shown to us. No one wants to see these. Just like no one wants to receive spam emails, or receive telemarketing calls. While companies keep using these old school techniques because at some point there are responses to these things, you don't have the time or budget as an individual to invest in something that will yield a 1% return at most.

Instead, you need to think about the true value that you provide to others. This goes back to your personal brand:

- Do you save people time or money?
- Do you do the work of 5 people at a fraction of the time?
- Do you do award-winning caliber work without the cost of a large company?
- Do you have subject matter expertise that very few individuals have?
- Do you have the flexibility to work on a project which may not have the need for a full-time employee?

Finding your personal value proposition and making it clear to everyone you work with and for will continually remind people why you are the right choice for the job. That makes you invaluable, and will create customers that keep coming back.

Referrals

Finally, when people see how much value you provide to them, they will gladly provide you with references and referrals. But don't wait for them to do it on their own. Sometimes, even the most loyal customers need a little prompting.

Don't be afraid to ask someone directly to write a review, a reference letter, or serve as a reference for a proposal. Most people are happy to do this, though some might not volunteer to do it unless prompted.

Part 5:

Get Organized

While it's great to be busy in your Freelance Career, as that can often be a sign of success, the busier you are, the more important it is to stay organized to keep track of it all. Let's explore a few important ways to do that.

Templatize... Everything (almost)

You will supercharge your productivity if you are able to create repeatable processes and documents for the things that you do frequently.

Many in the creative professions balk at this suggestion because they feel that creating templates for things takes the creativity out of them. Our response to that line of thinking is this: don't templatize your creative product, but templatize *everything else*.

If you are ever going to make the same or similar document more than one, make a template. Proposals, invoices, meeting agendas, project timelines, contracts, marketing plans, strategies, letterhead, and anything else you can think of can be made into a template that can be modified as needed later.

Templates provide great starting points and actually enhance your ability to be creative. The grunt work of setting up a document or structure of a file is already done for you. All that's left is for you to add your expertise and/or creativity.

Take Notes

Even if you have the world's best memory, if you are self employed, chances are you don't have a lot of back up if you forget a detail or need to be reminded of something that happened a few months or weeks ago. While you can sometimes ask your employer for this, you don't want to do this too often or else they might lose confidence in your ability to keep up with them.



Instead, make sure you take notes so you can refer back to them. There are many ways to do this, so don't think you have to be constantly typing or writing, though if you keep a document of notes handy, you could certainly do that while you're in meetings.

Alternatively, you can ask your client if you can record your calls, and then use a voice transcription service like Rev (or many others) to either automatically transcribe or use human transcription. This means you can have detailed notes of your meeting without distracting yourself with typing or writing during an important conversation.

There are also many virtual assistant services that can provide note taking capabilities for some of your important calls and meetings.

Make a budget

Every good company has strong financial oversight, planning, and reporting. Don't do anything less with your Freelance Career! Even though you might have a workforce of one, treat your efforts as you would a business. Create a budget for operational, marketing, and client expenses, as well as anything else you need.

Make sure your budget takes into account your cashflow, and be careful to include all of those "little" things that pop up.

You might consider hiring a bookkeeper to help you track things and get your expenses ready for taxes. If you find yourself extremely busy, this may be necessary to avoid a crunch of trying to either remember all your expenses or tracking down receipts and payments.

Create a routine

Many people in a Freelance Career work from home, remotely, or otherwise, don't have an office to go into at a regular time each day. While some people are very good at being productive despite this lack of structure, most of us need a little more routine in our lives in order to make sure we get everything done during the day.

There are several ways to do this, and here are just a few suggestions:

- Create a to-do list each day or week.
- Keep a detailed calendar of your meetings, and even block off times of the day when you need to do work.
- Schedule time to work on winning new business if you frequently take on new projects
- In order to avoid living in meetings, set aside certain days where you will take meetings (whether in person or virtually), and then you can use the rest of your days to get work done.

- Create regular “break” times so that you can make sure you aren’t sitting and spinning your wheels trying to solve a problem for too long. Sometimes, taking a walk, getting some coffee, or simply thinking about something different can help you put a challenge or problem into perspective.
- Schedule a regular time to send out client invoices and pay bills. This will help you avoid the stress of having to remember when to do this, or feel like its hanging over your head. Having a consistent day each month that you handle this also prevents this from distracting you from getting work done.

Creating the best routine for you will help you make sure you get what you need done, while not taking too much time out of your busy schedule.

Build Partnerships

Even if you’re an expert in your field, you may run across many things that you aren’t an expert in. For this reason, you need to have people you can rely on to help you get these challenging tasks or projects completed.

Building partnerships and alliances with others will help you scale your ability to help solve your clients’ challenges, but it can also provide you with the relief of knowing that you don’t have to be all alone in your work.

An added benefit of partnerships is that they can often serve as a referral channel for more work or opportunities, and they can help you win bigger projects or even some that are a little outside of your past work and your comfort area. They can help you grow with the safety of knowing you have backup if you run into difficulty.

Part 6:

Create a safety net

While there are many benefits to a career of independence and flexibility, you need to make sure you are prepared for unexpected downturns or even lulls between gigs. Creating a safety net for yourself is critical to your long term success in a Freelance Career.

Let's explore a few aspects of this below. We also highly recommend you work with a financial planner that understands the unique needs of freelancers and other self employed individuals. They will be able to help guide you to make the best decisions for your present and future needs.



Insurance and Benefits

When you work for a company full-time, you often have access to health benefits that are purchased at group discount rates, and in many cases some or part of those benefits are paid for by the employer.

When you are self-employed, this is not the case, so getting the best insurance and benefits possible can often mean a mixture of price and services. If you don't have a spouse or partner that you can get benefits through, this can leave you even more vulnerable. You're going to have to negotiate your own rates as a party of one, as opposed to a large group like many employers. This can put you at a disadvantage, but despite this, forgoing insurance can be even worse!

In addition to health insurance, you should also be considering other things like life insurance, long term care insurance, and other things that can help both you and your family if something unexpected happens.

Savings & Investments

Many people starting out their Freelance Career are finding new and creative ways to earn money for the first time, and because of the strain and struggle (much like that of starting a new business with multiple employees), they are reluctant to put in place a strong plan to put money away for the future.

While you may be encountering difficulties and new expenses as the owner of your own one-person business, make sure you get in the habit of saving at least a little money every month. You can always increase this over time, but setting the habit from the beginning means that it's something that you make a part of your Freelance Career, and not something you will "get to" once you start making more money.

Mentorship & a Referral Network

Another non-financial way of creating a safety net is to have someone (or possibly a group of people) that you can turn to for advice. A mentor is someone who has been in your shoes before, and doesn't seek financial compensation in order to help. Trust us, it helps to have a mentor and to be a mentor to others.

Take this opportunity to find someone to help you when you get stuck or have questions that take someone with experience to answer.

More broadly speaking, you should also establish a network of people that you feel comfortable referring business to, and that are happy to do the same in return. This is another kind of "insurance" that will help you make sure you have a pipeline of business coming your way.

Ready to get started?

Going from an occasional freelancer to a Freelance Career may not suit everyone, but

At CareerGig we offer freelancers many tools in order to be successful and we continue to grow our CareerGig Platform™ every day.

About CareerGig

CAREER BENEFITS. GIG LIFESTYLE. **CHOOSE BOTH.**

The gig economy has been around for a long time, even if most people don't realize it. Instead of a traditional, in-office, full-time job with a single company, freelancers work as short-term, temporary, remote or independent contractors for one or a variety of employers.

The pro's of freelance work are flexibility, agency, and diversity of work and learning options. However, freelancers face constant challenges of lack of access to affordable benefits and the constant search for that next gig.

We are building a technology platform and ecosystem that turns freelance work into a career. The platform connects freelancers with employers, validates work history and qualifications, simplifies the onboarding and management of freelancers and reduces the cost and time involved with getting workers into a gig.

CareerGig

www.careergig.com

contact@careergig.com

©Digics, Inc. All rights reserved.

