

## About the author

Marsha Maung is a freelance graphic designer and writer who has been working from home since 1998...ever since her first child was born...or rather, before her first son was born. With a legal background as a corporate lawyer in a major bank in her country, she successfully propels her career as a freelancer based on the knowledge she has gained in the corporate world, trials and tribulations as a singer, dancer, tutor, writer and designer, and the advice she has gained from many people she has spoken to in the past. This invaluable book tells of how she turned from corporate person with an addiction to coffee turns [mom@home](#) and [mom@work](#) in 2 easy and yet difficult years of working through the doldrums of business and hectic dateline chasing days of freelancing.

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***The Lance in freelancing : Marsha Maung a.k.a. MAUNG MARSHA***

a self-printed ebook sold mainly through the Internet <http://www.lulu.com>

***PUBLICATION HISTORY***

First printed in January 2005

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First version printed January 2005

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<http://www.creativejooz.com>

Her books can be found on most ebook sale sites but MAINLY sold through a self-publishing site called [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com). Her online ebook store is located at [HTTP://WWW.LULU.COM/MARSHAMAUNG](http://WWW.LULU.COM/MARSHAMAUNG)

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### Note from the author

Congratulations! You're taking the very first step towards making a living out of doing something you like doing. It could be anything from scrapbooking to writing to drawing to cake-baking. The idea is that you do it on your own terms. That's what we all call freelancing.

On what inspired me into writing this book? I love writing and reading, for one. And number 2, people who knows me personally knows that I am an aggressive promoter of freelancing and work at home environments. I think being employed is a complete waste of time. There's this Chinese saying that goes like this, "With 2 hands, 2 legs. You won't die without a job".....

Think about it. It's true, isn't it? Even people without fully functioning limbs or eyes, ears or voice boxes can make a living, why not us? We're perfectly healthy fully functioning human beings. Shame on us.

Of course, I believe that we should all be employed only IF WE WANT TO. Once we start feeling that work is a complete drag, it's time to throw in the towel. Life's too short to live it on other people's terms.

As a mother, I felt that I spent a lot of time traveling to and from work, was constantly thinking and worrying about my kids when I was at work. The wallpaper, pictures, posters, business-card sized photos in my wallet didn't help much. I wanted to **spend my time** with them **when I want to**. I didn't want my boss to tell me when I could do the things I wanted to. **He didn't have the right to live my life for me.**

**And that makes me ask myself one big fat question.** Isn't it amazing that schools never teach a person how to be a

boss...even in the business school, they don't teach you how to **do your own thing**? Dance your own jig. Sing your own song.

One of the most important things that I have learnt throughout the years of being a freelancer is this – there is no right way and no wrong way. Absolutely not! You see, throughout the years, I have consulted more people than I would actually care to admit on the issue of how to get clients and some of them said that I did things the **WRONG** way and some took pains to show me the **RIGHT** way but in the end, I was awakened. Some said that I was doing the right thing, in the wrong way and some said I was right.

There is this elderly person who has been working in the real estate business woke me up and opened my eyes to the world of freelancers. He told me, *“Marsha, freelancing is more than just a job someone holds at home just to kill the boredom or fill in the blanks. If someone wants to do freelancing work, they need to be serious about it and they need to be a professional homeworker. There are no 2 ways about it”*. I took this to the heart, of course, because at the point this advice was dispensed, I felt that it insulted me. He was insulting me with his comment, assuming that I wasn't serious about my work.

But the truth is, I was **not** serious **enough** about my work, I didn't have it in me to treat this business as part of my career. It is not just something I am doing to pay the bills or to simply kill the time I have on my hands when my kids are napping. No sirree!! This is a **CAREER**! I love doing what I am doing, that's graphic designing and writing, and I should give it MY ALL. MY EVERYTHING.

**CAREER.** Big word. And let me tell you this – it's a big job.

You'll be surprised that a lot of people want or wish that they could work from home. Yes, it's true. If given a chance and a guarantee, a lot of people will start typing their own resignation letter.

I have always been a firm supporter of people who wished to work from home, whatever their reasons. Some of them are fed-up with their bosses, some have been passed up for promotions time and time again, some hate the mundane environment of the corporate world, some of them have had enough of the office politics, some of them, like me, just want to be with their kids while they are still young. Whatever the reasons, when the decision to make the jump from corporate cheetah to freelance fighter, it should always be a serious one.

One of the hardest part of freelancing is "Getting the Clients" to sign your agreement or quote. The second hardest part is "Time Management" which I will deal with in a separate book because it's a completely separate issue altogether. So, I hope this book will truly give you the groundwork on how to start your home-based business and make sales fly off the ground.

Happy freelancing!  
Marsha

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Your freelance business.**

There are many terms these days with regards to this peculiar, demanding and enticing job offer. Some people call it 'freelancing', some people call it 'work at home', some people call it 'home business' and some people just call it 'working for themselves'. Whichever way you look at it and whatever name you choose to call it, it's a career that will catapult your conventional mind into doing cartwheels and maybe sometimes you want to pull your own hair.

As a young adult, our minds are filled with thoughts on how to make lots of money. As time goes on, we think about how to make **more money**. A few years later, we evolve : how to make an **INSANE** amount of money. Then we evolve again, as we approach the 'thirties' : how to make an **OBSCENE** amount of money in the **shortest period of time**, doing something that **we like to do and not having to work hard** for it.

A freelance career is not a short cut and if you are looking for one, you'd better stop reading this book! Even if someone from an MLM business (I have nothing against it and am supportive of several well-known MLM businesses, although not active in any) tells you that this offer is going to make you rich in a couple of months, they're really kidding you. Don't let others pull a quick one on you about working from home. I used to be as innocent as that, falling for scam after scam.

I sent envelopes containing my own hard-earned money (not a small amount, mind you) and sent them to people who claimed that it was a fee for a working at home project. I did this **TWICE**. The 2<sup>nd</sup> time, my husband advised me against it and I

listened to him. After a few weeks thinking, I decided to go ahead and post the money anyway. The reason? I wanted to prove me wrong. I kind of knew that it was a scam but if I sent the small amount of money now and then I get nothing back – then I will know **FOR SURE** that all businesses like that are scams. I would never, NEVER, NEVER fall for it again. I even told my husband that if I did it again, he'd have the right to behead me because my head was of no use to me anymore.

That's my experience as a newbie in this freelancing world.

We should not view freelancing as a part-time job or just a hobby. Some people may disagree with me and I will fully challenge them if they do – but freelancing should be serious business. Why, you ask?

Well, first of all, if you're reading this book, you should be rather keen on starting a home-based business, otherwise, you should be reading a Harry Potter, Bridget Jones' Diary ...or Lord of the Rings. But since you've picked this book from the bookshelves, it probably indicates your interest in making some money from home. But you're thinking to yourself, "I hope this is not another one of the scams and maybe it's an MLM business or anything like that".

While I don't think there's anything wrong with an MLM business since some of them are legitimate businesses run by some of the most positive minded people I know, but frankly, MLM is not for everyone.

### **It's the attitude**

Freelancing, like MLM, is not for everyone. Because I cannot fathom the idea that everyone likes to sit around at 3.30 in the morning, typing mindlessly on the computer, going to the kitchen

for the third time for the third cup of coffee to keep the eyelids up. Some people, I have discovered, still liked the fact that they have a job to go to, a boss to answer to, reports to write, meetings to attend...etc.

To me, working in the ratrace and corporate sector is hairy business. No seriously, it's really hairy because I wake up in time to brush my teeth but not my hair. I wake up not remembering to bring my brain along. I wake up thinking that it's Sunday and then jump up, whooshing around the room to get my pants and shoes on right....it's hairy also because I don't comb my hair in the morning and I have been named the person with the best hairstyle in the Bank that I was working for. To me, it's illogical for someone to want to answer to anybody but themselves.

However, this is the truth. Not everyone enjoys having no one to answer to. They like to have someone else take the responsibility...or maybe someone else to take the bullet. Taking the giant leap as an employee to becoming a freelancer is like making a giant leap of faith. It CAN get a little bit scary. But that's only because everything appears uncertain and there's absolutely no one to give you the kick you need when you're slacking. What happens is you're feeling out of sync with your computer, what happens when your client comes a-calling? What excuse is there to give?

Most people want....and **NEED** to have someone kick them and give them a budge when they're slacking. Let's admit it, everyone feels like slacking once in a while...even the best workers on the planet will feel like taking a longer-than-needed coffee break sometimes. And it is through my understanding, observation and belief that some people may complain about having to attend meetings after meetings but one of the reasons why they keep on attending those meetings is because they like the kind of security that the meetings give them. **They like to**

**complain about it because it sometimes makes them feel important.** Having to attend a meeting says a whole lot about a person. Unimportant people are not required to attend meetings while people who have the power to make decisions attend meetings. So, with this in mind, it can be difficult to come to terms with the fact that there will no longer be any meetings.

But as a freelancer, you will discover that it's absolutely not true! Even as a freelancer, you will constantly be required to attend meetings...online or offline, depending on the distance between you and your client.

The worst notion to come to terms with is that there is the security issue. We're talking about whether there's going to be enough money to feed the kids tomorrow. Even if you do, there's no guarantee that you would make enough money to pay all your bills and make sure the Bank does not repossess the house.

So, before you get your hands all muddy, take this risk into consideration because frankly, you've got to be prepared for anything. But if you work hard and work smart and work consistently, the possibility of making money from your freelancing business is very, very possible.

So, you might be asking yourself – gee, have I got what it takes to make it in this messy business this woman is writing about....some sort of lancing?

Let me ask you just one question? Have you got an attitude problem? If you do, **you're right for it!**

Freelancing and running your own business requires a lot of attitude and whole lot of other things as well. But I won't get into that here because this is the not the purpose of the book. The purpose of this book is to make sure you know how to get the

clients to use you and pay you...without you having to shout into their ears “USE ME!!!!” and “PAY ME!!”

But frankly speaking, sometimes we do that – shouting into their ears “USE ME!!” but we do it silently. And sometimes we send emails with PAY ME written all over the emails too. But of course, don’t quote me as saying this and then be shocked that it doesn’t work for you. So happens that the person/client that I am talking about is my uncle.

### **Time Management**

Having good time management skills – or learning how to manage your time well on the job – is essential to your business.

Remember this, you no longer have a secretary or clerk to type out your letters for you, or make your coffee or arrange your desks...if you’re used to this corporate lifestyle. You can no longer place a call to the courier service to send something for you, without thinking about the cost of courier service.

If you’re on a tight budget, chances are, you’re going to be doing all that....and more! So, good time management skills are an integral part of your success. But even if you don’t, it’s not too late to learn. You can start designing your own time sheets, attend courses or seminars to learn how to do that. But one of the most effective ways to learn how to manage your time well is to hear it from the horse’s mouth. It simply means that you should ask around and speak to a lot of people who run their own businesses. There’s lot of tips and tricks that you can pick up from successful business people.

You should also learn how to use an organizer like it’s a bible. Not to mention timesheets, checklists, to-do lists...etc. The

difference between good and bad time management is this - it could either spell **SUCCESS** or **FAILURE**.

You're fighting a battle with the clock and if you idle time away surfing the Internet (trust me, you **will** be tempted to do a lot during what you would call a working day), it's going to be an uphill climb getting back on track!

Deadlines and Timelines are as important to you now because every hour, every minute and every second spells **MONEY**. Potentially, there's dollars and cents involved in every single waking moment of your freelancing career. If you honor your deadlines and timelines that you present to your client, they'll respect you more and will turn into repeat customers. And that spell 'repeat business' which will probably solve your money-for-the-future problem.

## **Discipline**

From experience, one of the hardest things that I had to wrestle with was **discipline** during the early months (not days) of my freelancing career. If you're going to be working from home and is making use of your bedroom, TV room, living room or even kitchen (it doesn't matter), you may be looking 'temptation' in the face. In the working world, if you take a break, your boss might hunt you down and ask you about a project status. Just to give you a nudge towards work. But when you're freelancing, there's no one to pound on you like a hungry vulture. Infact, the only person you can rely on to keep you on your toes is you!

It's much too easy to turn on the TV for 5 minutes – you promised yourself – but let's face it, what TV program airs for 5 minutes? Who are we kidding, anyway? Unless we're keen followers of advertisements, the notion is, perhaps, possible.

Learning how to say ‘no’ to yourself is crucial to your new career. Freedom comes with a price and this is an important and worthwhile investment. Say ‘no’ when the temptation creeps up unannounced. Say ‘no’ if you’re thinking of just answering a couple of friendly emails or chat with a friend on Instant Messenger. If your friend calls when you’re trying to meet a deadline, tell them that you’re working on something important and will get back to them as soon as you’re done.

It’s not impossible to learn but it is a pretty tough journey. In a corporate environment, you have your co-workers to motivate you and push you. Here, you have no one...unless your spouse or kids are willing to take over the responsibility. Chances are, they are too happy with the fact that you’re home to care whether your client will receive their products in time or not.

But they do care about the money in your account. Call it irony if you want.

So, make it a point to commit to your work at specific times, and if you’re working, put the ‘I’m working damn hard for my money’ sign over the doorknob and start working. Designate times for rests too because you’re a freelancer but you’re still human. So, at specific times, take time off to tickle your kids and kiss your spouse. But right after that, get back to work, like you would in a corporate environment.

## **Money**

In a corporate environment, you have the accounts department to handle the accounting, financing, debt-chasing, projection of sales and profits, handling the P&L (Profit & Loss, for those as numerically dumb and blind as I am) accounts. In the freelancing world, it’s not easy for people like me.

The only reason I studied law was because there were no other options available to me that did not need me to count. Then again, I was wrong because even as a lawyer, I had to do accounting – as in billing my clients for the time I have taken to file their complaint, stamp their documents, place my signature on their agreement...etc. Money or financial knowledge is a necessity in this freelancing business. You're on your own and you have to count your own cents yourself now.

Make sure you do your accounts right and do it religiously. Then, you will see the financial progress you are making. Otherwise, there's just you doing the work, spending the money you get and then doing the work again and the spending it again.

If you have a proper accounting system, you'd be able to see the results there and then. With that, you can project your sales and in time, learn how to advertise properly and appropriately use the right avenues to increase your sales. I am not much of a financial guru here, so, I'll leave it at that.

Believe it or not, my accounts are as bad as my housecleaning abilities – completely horrible.

And it doesn't help much that payment is slow most of the time. You have to be ready for the fact that clients don't pay you the moment you issue them an invoice. No sir. This may be a foreign idea to you if you've never seen the accounting department or collections department work. You may have to offer your clients some lag time...we call it 'credit'....before they will pay you. This often means a lag time of between 15 days to 180 days. Of course, this varies from country to country, company to company. But generally, the bigger the company, the slower the payments are because the bigger they are, the more red tapes there are. The more red tapes there are, the longer the process will be to get the payment approved and the checks signed.

Accordingly, the lag time is needed for them to prepare your ONE SINGLE check for a minuscule amount. But this is the real thing....**and** this is what your employer had to do while paying your monthly salary.

So, when you're making financial plans, include the lag time too.

### **Positivity**

You know how companies spend tens of thousands of dollars on building the morale of the company staff, creating loyalty and ensuring that the morale of the staff is high? You know how companies invest millions on sending their staff to training programs and corporate boot camps to make sure that the staff know what they're doing...and telling the clients the right thing?

That's important.

To you, that's not news, is it? That's important because as a freelancer, there will be lots of times when you feel like just throwing in the towel, giving it up, quitting or simply just go back to the corporate world – giving up your dreams of working for yourself. It's really easy...but it's the chicken way out! When you're on your own, the survival of your dreams and business will rest heavily on how you are able to keep your chin up. The positive-mind can learnt, although some people are simply born with it. But based on experience and my personal observation, many of my negative and pessimistic friends successfully managed to be more positive in their ways.

Feed yourself with lots of positive things like positive minded people, positive books, statements, quotes, magazines and mix around with positive friends, online and offline. The most important thing is for you to keep your mind open and be

receptive of those messages. You're going to be wasting your effort if you're always doubting the messages and the books. If so, I advice you to leave the books there and forget about your business. You should just stick to your day job because negative people will find it tough in the freelancing world. I'm not being cruel but I am being honest. I can read a thousand books on how to stay motivated or inspire myself but if I read it with a lot of skepticism, the exercise becomes totally pointless, you get what I am saying here?

It sounds so trivial and it might even sound a little funny that I mentioning here but it's really, really **REALLY** important to your business.

Online, you can join online communities with lots of other homeworkers and maybe you can find a networking community who could share ideas with you.

You can get the general idea here.

<http://www.workingsolo.com>

<http://www.working-at-home-business.com>

<http://www.internetbasedmoms.com>

<http://www.wahm.com>

<http://www.mhbm.com>

<http://www.workathomecentral.com>

<http://www.homeworkers.org>

<http://www.mom4mom.com>

<http://www.ehomemakers.net>

There are tons more similar websites and you can simply run a search through google.com or Yahoo.com and type in the words 'work at home' and there would hundreds and thousands of websites with similar structure that may be able to provide support for you and your business.

But maneuver your way around the websites carefully and read the contents of the site meticulously before giving them your email address. If you do decide to give them your email address, make sure you don't give them an email address that you use for your business. The reason is because some scam companies or individuals are disguised as working at home resource centres or support groups. It's easy for them to prey on people who are trying to make a living from home. We're really easy preys, you see. So, check the content first before giving them your contact information.

Now, I will get to the purpose of this book. In **Chapter 2**, we will look at ways to promote your business and also generating and increasing your income through cheap, free, affordable and expensive methods of advertising and promotion. Every single home business have their own direction, focus, ideas and budget, so, it's important to look for ones that suits your business.

Please note that there is no ONE SINGLE METHOD that works for everyone. Every business and every individual will find their own success using one or more of the following methods. A combination of all the methods available, trying and testing, persistent and vigilant effort will turn your passion into a gold mine.

If you're working on a small or medium budget, you have to be more careful about advertising. You want optimum eyeballs (exposure) for minimum advertising expenditure, don't you?

And in the following chapter, I will also show you how to go about promoting your business to people without offending anyone or cheating people off.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Understanding selling & promoting**

In a corporate environment, we leave the advertising to people who are experienced in advertising and promotion. Sometimes companies even leave it to PR companies....the PR companies decide where to invest the client's money in to achieve maximum results and the company will just focus on doing their own thing.

And unless you have a MEGA-big budget to hire a PR agent or advertising company to do that for you, you're left with this big job yourself.

### **Important advertising facts**

There are things to remember at all times when you're trying to advertise or promote your business.

1. Small budget, Maximum results.

Most of us look for ways to advertise and promote ourselves for free. While this is possible online, it's a little harder when it comes to conventional advertising like ads in newspapers, newsletters, magazines, radio and other printing of marketing collateral. It's not impossible if we think in a very creative manner, like trading services, offering something else in return for the ad, value-for-money trade-offs, offering prizes for contests....etc. Most medium-sized publications will consider giving ad spaces away that way. The larger ones tend to be more selective.

The thing is that we don't mind spending a little bit of money on advertising but we want to know that the money we spend will bring in **optimum** results...as much as it can possibly bring in.

## 2. Brand

What brand, you're asking? Even the smallest companies need an identity or a business. For instance, my direction is 'competence', 'commitment' and 'availability'. Hence, my tagline has always been '*the freelancer that never sleeps*'. Trust me, it's very important for you to create a brand for your products and services. Regardless of how small your company is, it's important to have a logo or a tagline that others will automatically associate you with. Branding is part of building an image for your small freelancing business. But we all know it's probably a far cry from COLGATE, APPLE, IBM, MILO or P&G in the beginning but unless we have a brand in place, we don't have a direction. Having a logo, a brand or a tagline (at least one of these is recommended) can give your business a sort of direction, a mission, a planned business route.

For a start, think about the people who would potentially turn into your clients. Think about them, imagine what they are like, think about how they would react when you speak to them. Pretend you're looking at them and you're making a proposal to them – what would they like to see or hear from you...etc?

Write down your thoughts on a piece of paper – yes, every single little thought...even the ones you think is not worth writing. You'll be surprised at the kind of things you can come up with. The reason why I say write everything down is because you may not derive anything from just one small point but if you combine it with other points, it may make perfect sense after all.

Then write the products and services that you plan to sell to them.

Then write down the special qualities that your products and services are going to have and the benefits they would have when they use your services.

Then write down the value of your services – yes, as in pricing! You need this to determine your target market and affordability. You need to categorize and structure out your products and services to suit the right kind of people.

Once you have that down, it shouldn't be too hard to imagine your products and the direction you should be heading with your new freelancing career.

One of the most important things I have learnt during the course of my freelancing career is this – never undermine yourself.

Even if you're not a corporate company boasting of hundreds of staff, you're still a 'company'. You're still offering reliable and professional services to people who are willing to pay you for your products or services. You have to give the impression that whatever you're selling and the prices you're quoting is value for money. You're giving them real value here because you're **helping them save money**.

The funniest thing is that most corporate people have this notion or image in their minds that freelancers know nothing more than to stuff envelopes and fold stars at home! This is not a joke. I have had to deal

with too many people raising their eyebrows in disbelief when I tell them that I am a qualified lawyer and that I have given up my career to work from home. I think if I stuck my tongue out at them at that point in time, they might send me into a psychiatric ward. **Not many people think of us seriously.** Just because we give up our high flying careers to run our own business doesn't mean that they should undermine us. So, the stance that I have taken throughout these years is one of **CONFIDENCE**. If I am not confident, I **FAKE IT WELL**.

When I tell them that I work from home, I look up at them and don't let my eyes stray from their gaze. This way, they know I am not kidding – and I am not kidding about my work either.

Others may also perceive your business to be hodgepodge when they find that you're cheaper than other bigger companies. Take the time to explain that if they don't like you to be cheap, then they can offer to pay more. But thankfully, I find that most of my clients understand that I cheaper than others or other brands not because I am worth less, but it's because I have less overhead cost. While IBM can give you top-notch solutions, you can also provide them with the same (similar) programs and software...and maybe hardware as well without the astronomical cost.

You need to create the impression that (example only, please don't sue me) branded products cost more because they have included advertising costs, branding, research costs into the price of the products/services. They have also included electricity bills, phone bills...etc into the cost of their

services/products. It's the reality of business and it happens everywhere in the world. They still need to pay the bills so they include their bills into the prices that they charge their clients/customers. And since they are larger companies, they have bigger...MUCH BIGGER.....bills to pay. Hence, their pricing is higher. We don't have the same problems, so, our prices are lower.

In order to give them this impression, it's important for you to stand by your brand, your name and the quality of services and products. And even if you don't feel like it's the best, you'd better make it look like it's a lot more than it is....especially in the beginning.

Belief in your own products and services will create awareness and confidence in you and your services. And your confidence will rub off on the your clients and customers.

### 3. Be a guru first

This book will and can only give you the basic details about promoting and advertising your business. The truth is that you must make an effort to be knowledgeable in whatever you're selling or the services you are providing in order to appear to be a provider your clients can rely on.

Imagine yourself trying to sell shoes when you have no idea what is the best kind of material there is to be used in manufacturing shoes. Imagine you're trying to sell printers when you don't know paper quality/weight and what CMYK and RGB means.

So, before you start advertising, promoting and selling your products/services, make sure you don't make yourself look like you're cooking up a story. If you want to, you can – just make sure you're darn near perfect in looking like you know **EXACTLY** what you're talking about.

In short, you need to convince others – and yourself – that you're on top of everything concerning your line of work.

You can do this by reading a lot. The Internet is an amazingly useful tool for this because you can find virtually anything to read about on the Internet. So, go surfing.

And not the beach kind of surfing too.

If you're unfamiliar, no worries. Open your Internet browser, (as in Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Netscape...etc) and on top, you can see the address bar. Type in 'yahoo.com' or 'google.com'. Then a webpage will appear. In the search box...a box with nothing in it...and it's just obvious that you can type something into it because the cursor in the box is blinking, right?. Now, type in your keyword.

If you're trying to find out about selling software, type 'software' into the box and then press 'enter'.

There will be a long list of links you can click on to go and find out about the topic 'software'. It's amazing the kind of things you can find out from the Internet just from surfing aimlessly. As a writer, I rely

heavily on the Internet and the information that I can find there to survive. Literally.

It's also good to invest some time and money in reading books and magazines on topics related to your service/products. Get acquainted and stay informed!! Stay on top of it or you're out of the race. There are tons of books and ebooks written about just about anything on the planet. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) is a good source for books and you can easily purchase ebooks off the Internet with a credit/debit/charge card.

And another method of finding out more information about your business is simply just talking to other people about their ideas and thoughts about your industry. You'll be genuinely surprised that even the most non-knowledgeable (most times, that's your spouse and kids) have their own ideas and thoughts about it.

I asked my kid what does McDonalds mean to him and he said 'burgers' and 'French Fries'. I ask my husband what McDonalds mean to him, he said 'good advertising'. I asked a close friend what McDonalds means to her and she said 'burgers from hell'.

So, talk to people you know or people you have just met about your business. They can give you a different perspective about what you're about to indulge in – and that, my friend, is healthy.

Get into online communities from work at home websites, join associations, networking communities, clubs and groups...and what-have-you-nots that you think you will benefit from.

#### 4. Getting yourself accustomed

Get yourself accustomed? What's **THAT** got to do with advertising...or my business, for that matter, you're asking? Lots, I'm telling you.

Before you start pulling in the clients and developing your plans, writing your proposals, think about getting yourself accustomed to the idea of not having to work for someone else. Your mindset is very important for the health and wealth of your new business. As long as you are doubtful, your business will not go anywhere. You have to be sure about what you're doing and that this is your new career.

It may sound like a work solution made in Heaven but trust me, sometimes it is not. We are, if you belonged to the ratrace before this, accustomed to a different kind of environment and it's going to take some time for you to develop the skills needed to propel your business into a profitable one. It's like you're no longer sitting in the "Marketing Executive" chair but the "CEO" chair.

Infact, you need to have some financial reserve for the first 6 months (at least!) and be prepared for **LOSS**. Urgh, what an ugly, repulsive word! So much easier to type than the word '**PROFIT**' and yet it leaves a bad aftertaste in my mouth.

You have to get accustomed to kicking yourself when you're not progressing or moving along. You have get accustomed to having to do everything yourself. You have to get accustomed to the fact that you have to chase for payment every single day of your freelance

career. You have to get accustomed to the fact that you sometimes have to **BEG** for work. You have to get accustomed to sweet-talking and entertaining your clients. You have to get accustomed to the fact that every end of the month, there won't be money in it unless your clients deposit money into it. You have to get accustomed to the fact that when you are sick, or your family members are sick, you have to pay for it yourself unless you have insurance coverage. You have to get accustomed to the fact that when the insurance company calls, you have to settle it yourself. You have to prepare yourself for the fact that you have to save some money every month because there's no employer to actually contribute to it. You have to get accustomed to the fact that whenever you take time off, sick leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, annual leave or holiday, you don't earn money from it.

I could go on but I won't.

Once you've gotten to the changes that will occur to your life once you've made the decision to freelance, you're ready to advertise and promote.

#### 5. Create contacts

I love meeting people...**but** I love meeting my friends and being with my family members more. Regardless of how much you hate making small talk, meeting people, making contacts, handing out your business cards, talking to others about your business/services, you're going to have to if you want to make it as a freelancer. You have to keep an eye out for people, potential clients. You need to talk and be friendly to people....even when you're driving cause you'll never

know if this person is going to be your next client or not! This was difficult for me because I am like a **devil** behind the wheel!! I freely honk my horn at other drivers on the road, swear incessantly at road hoggers, and will gladly show others the middle finger if they piss me off.

If I can change, you can!

If you're planning to leave your job but have not, this is the perfect time to build your contact base. A large collection of business cards is like a gold mine to you. You have to know this because with a large collection of business cards, this means you have a big database of potential clients.

I was once asked by a friend who has just started to freelance to exchange contacts with her. I asked her how many cards she had and she said 50. My jaw dropped to my knees. How can someone who has been working for the past 10 years collect only 50 cards in her career? I asked her that and she said, "I throw most of them out already".

In my career as a Banking Officer (I was in the Legal a.k.a. debt collection department), eventhough I wasn't one of the most favored people to receive phone calls from, I managed to collect and keep 1,500 call cards.

You don't have to do that and if you have not, this is not the end of the road for you. Don't be discouraged if you have been throwing out business cards as well. But the remedial action you can take is to start collecting ALL KINDS OF business cards from

people you meet everywhere. Even the bakery and the fish monger, if they have one!

Meanwhile, unknowingly, I have created a big database of potential clients. I never knew the true magnitude behind the saying ‘it’s not what you know, but who you know’ until I started freelancing. It was a culture shock but being able to adapt quickly is a plus point.

Why I said that you should start creating your network before you leave your job is because once you leave your job, you’ll start sounding like you’re begging for work. No seriously, this is how real it is.

Everytime you call someone, they may not say it, but in their mind, they’re thinking, “This is not **REALLY** chit-chat conversation. She/he’s trying to sell me something” and it’s a real rough ride when you’re trying to make it in the freelance world.

For one, you don’t have the backup of a big corporate image. Two, you can’t hide the fact that “YES, damn it! I want your business!”

But as I grow with my business, I get used to making cold calls and sales calls. My skin has gotten thicker and I have learnt how to use the friendly-but-matter-of-fact tone of voice when calling people on the phone. I now know that my objective is not to SELL on the phone but to establish a connection with the person I am talking to.

But it was a rough ride, all right.

I can assure you that you will probably go through a similar experience but along the way, you will benefit from all this.

You have to understand the point of selling and the way to sell. Every one of us is selling something every day. When you're talking to your friends about the latest promotion in a shopping mall, you're helping someone sell something. When you apply for a job, you're selling your services and your portfolio. It's all selling but we all have this idea of selling as someone who has to go around asking and begging people to buy some detergent from them. No. It doesn't have to appear to be like that.

If you conduct yourself well, you should sound like and appear to be offering them help.

Compare these two statements::

“This is Alice. I'm a writer. Can I offer you my services? I write good content and have extensive experience. My services are relatively low cost.”

“This is Alice. I'm a writer. I think I can help you develop content for your website in a very professional and credible manner at a very low cost. I think you'd be interested to know more”

Which one would you prefer and think presents a more professional image?

The 2<sup>nd</sup> statement? You're right?

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> statement, Alice spoke in a very confident voice and was offering her help. She sounded like if

the person rejects her, it's their loss. It's good for both the potential client and the freelancer.

The potential client is curious but is not pressured. The freelancer, in the event the potential clients rejects her/him, gets to hang up with her dignity intact.

But we'll get into that a little later, won't we?

#### 6. Naming your baby

Ok, we're back to building an identity. Why is it so? Simple. It's **IMPORTANT!!!**

I named MY baby creativejooz...because I couldn't secure the name creativejuice – not surprisingly, it was taken. And 2, the jooz have double o in it, so, it's a naturally easy name to remember and it relates to my work.

If you're still in the process of planning and starting your new freelance business, you have to think of a name that would stick...even if you don't have a domain name that would. The criteria is simple:-

1. it has to be memorable
2. appealing
3. descriptive
4. timeless – that means it doesn't have a time frame in it. Like creativejooz2004...or something like that. Associating a time or year to the name is not a bad idea if you have already established yourself because by the then, you're trying to tell people that you've been around for some time. But let's just say you've started business in 2001. And your company name is

Creative Jooz (2001) Limited Company, you're just going to give away the fact that you're merely a few years old before they even start to work with you!

And that's a bad idea.

The general idea is this – if they don't ask, you don't tell, you get it?

5. Make it memorable. You have to make it memorable so that when your potential clients or leads try to remember you, they don't go to the competitor website or contact them for details.

This is not being mean or being elusive...or anything like that. It's **you** who wants to build a brand name for yourself and create an image, isn't it? So, if you do a good job, why would you want to lead your potential clients to your competitors'?

Let's take for example, you manufacture and distribute Mugs. Would you remember ABG Mugs Manufacturers Inc. more or Magnificent Mug Inc more?

It is definitely worth it to invest some time and effort into thinking of a creative and memorable name.

Write it all down on a piece of paper and at the end of the week, review the list of names and pick the ones you would like to use.

Approach some friends and ask them which name they would remember the most – and then pick the best from the lot.

But when you're asking your friends about the names, remember to ask them what they think about the name, what is the first thought that comes to their minds when they see or hear the name.

If you've chosen a name that is not associated with your real person name, then you may have to deal with issues concerning DBA. You may not have to register your name, although it is advisable that you do, so that others won't be able to copy and use the same business name. But to protect yourself, in every single business and marketing document that you use, make sure you include your DBA (Doing Business As). For example, Marsha Maung (DBA Creative Jooz). It doesn't protect you, but it will do if you're just doing small business.

One way to research on your preferred name is to run the list of names under a GOOGLE or YAHOO search. Actually, any search engine would do. Just search under the name and take a look at the results. If there are lots of results for the name you have chosen, then you'd better choose a different name unless you want to be closely associated with the people with the same name. (There's a flip side to this:: if they are an established company, you could benefit from the accidental exposure over the Internet)

I won't go into too much detail about registering your name because it would be a whole book all by itself. So, let's get on with it, huh?

6. Don't stop selling

As a freelancer, you can never stop selling, like it or not. You're selling on the net, you're selling on the phone, you're selling on the sidewalk, you're selling in the shopping mall, you're selling through your emails, you're selling through your letters....everywhere!

Someone close to me (I won't reveal who for I may be dead after writing this if I do) once told me that she was selling so badly and extensively that she was even chatting and selling to someone using the cubicle next to her in a hotel's bathroom. Excellent idea since she sold the other lady (whom she met for only full 10 minutes) products worth USD100 one shot! Incredible.

If possible, you should be selling in your sleep but unfortunately (sometimes, fortunately) sleeping is the only break you will ever get from your freelancing career.

Big mistakes are made when freelancers slack because jobs are coming in. The reason is this. Freelancers are always pitching and proposing ideas to clients. We have to get used to this. If you've never been in the sales department in your previous employment, then you're not completely ready for this. Get used to it!

The sale is not made when your client asks for a proposal or says that he/she wants to see your portfolio. Remember this – the sale is closed when your client **SIGNS** the proposal or estimate or quote. When the client or customer asks to see your sample or proposal, they could be either one of the following:

- A competitor who is out stalking down competitors and sizing them up.
- A genuine potential client who is also talking to hundreds of other people doing the same thing that you're doing.

I made the same mistake during the early days and months of my freelancing career. I started bringing out the champagne bottles when a potential client rings me up to meet up. The delight soon turned into bitter disappointment when it turned sour. I was not the kind of person the potential client was looking for. Granted, he preferred men. But the truth be told, he was looking for a man with charisma and lots of character.

Sometimes, we make the mistake of assuming that the client has agreed to give us the job and then we slack because we think we've achieved the monthly target. Then 2 or 3 clients think that they'd rather go with your competitors...then what?

Then you start scurrying around looking for business because you've over-estimated your monthly sale. By then, it **could** be too late.

So, don't make the mistake of assuming that you've closed the sale too soon. Until and unless the clients sign the agreement, you're still out in the open.

**Keep selling, keep selling, keep selling!!**

It's better to have lots of jobs (which you can outsource later on) instead of very few jobs...which means very little income.

7. Maintain your professionalism

If you're a parent, like me, who has given up a lucrative and high-flying career to freelance just because you thought you could have your kids running around you, screaming and fighting and laughing all around you when you're on the job or in a meeting, you're in for a very shocking experience.

Yes, freelancing gives you the freedom to make choices and it also gives you more chances to be with your kids, as and when you want to. You get to schedule your own time as and when you want. You can decide to work on your projects a little later and play soccer with the kids now. But when 'later' rolls around, you'd have to put the kids aside and concentrate on your work.

Although I would like to think that I could work with my kids around...it's not entirely possible. I **CAN** work when they're around – when they're sleeping.

Like any other businesses, kids and the business world have to remain separate.

Anyone who works from home can tell you this – first, you have to schedule your work times (that’s the freedom we’re talking about) and then you also have to schedule time with the kids (and spouse). Secondly, be prepared for unforeseen circumstances...for instance, interruption during your working hours.

I tell my helper (who helps out with the kids) that I am not to be disturbed between 9.00a.m. till 11.00a.m. and then from 2.30p.m. till 4.30p.m. That’s my afternoon (or day time) working schedule. She can interrupt me during this time if it’s a life and death situation!

Of course I said this in mirth but I just wanted to point out to her that the stated time is very important. During this time, I am planning, answering emails, talking to clients on the phone. In the afternoon and early evening, I am working on my urgent projects.

Make sure you have special arrangements with a close friend, a baby sitter, nanny, cousin, sister...whomever it is you can find to help you out with the kids – hook up with them. Pay them if they need money.

But someone has to take over the kids while you work.

This applies for even for businesses like making home-baked cakes and sewing or even stuffing envelopes. Imagine doing all that with the kids around. They could either poke themselves with the needles or you could miss a button or two. You could mis-measure the flour when baking and have to re-bake everything all over again. Otherwise, they could end up scrunching up all the envelopes that you have been painstakingly stuffing and use them as footballs. It's just not cost-effective....or EFFECTIVE at all.

It's better to just decide the time you want to work, get someone to take over during that period. The rest of the time, you can spend with the kids.

#### 8. Bartering and Tying-up

In today's business world, you'd be surprised to find that lots of other people have opted for the SOHO environment over the fast-paced (not that freelancing is any slower) ratrace. Find these people and tie-up with them.

If you're just starting out, it's easy to imagine and assume that you're working on a tight budget. You could be stretching your savings over a few months and also projecting some loss. So, your budget for advertising and promotion could be very small.

But this is not the end of the road. A lot of people wonder and wonder about how they're ever going to get people to use their services if they don't advertise big.

Yes, we should all think big but freelancers, essentially, should start out small.

Tying up with people from related industries (and sometimes your competitors as well) can work to your advantage.

I am a graphic designer and writer. For the first couple of months, I spent my days writing emails to printing companies and content providers asking them if they wanted to tie up with me. With the printers, I told them that I would design as many things as they wanted me to for them during the few months and they can sponsor the printing of my initial thousand of brochures. This worked very well for them because I ended up designing brochures, newsletters, call cards and flyers...but they're all for free.

Why did I do that? For free? You're kidding!

If you think on a deeper level, it's more like 'delayed gratification'. The free stuff that I did for them became my portfolio because I was relatively inexperienced on my own. And later on, when I start to charge others for my work and services, I could charge them higher because I had a nice little portfolio to show them. On top of that, I had those brochures to send out and it was all rather nicely printed on high quality paper that I didn't have to pay for, anyway, right?

Tying up with your competitors has benefits too. In the SOHO and freelancing environment, don't make enemies. Don't snub them because they're

competing in the same market or trying to steal your bread and butter.

You see, I tied up with Designers (freelancers), design houses, photographers, copywriters and even ad agencies and these are the people making bigger bucks than me in the same industry. They are in direct competition with me and I should stay away from them in case they try to get my clients from me. But no. I stay in touch and in close contact with them.

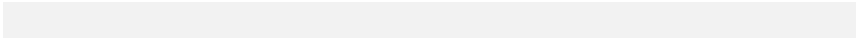
I do that because they sometimes have a problem with staffing and have too much on their plate. And conveniently, if I make friends with them, they would ask me to take over their jobs and projects when they feel that they're already nose-deep in work!

It sounds tiresome, troublesome and it is. I am not going to lie and say that it's all wonderful and a walk in the park for me. But persistently build a network of people you can work with and at the end of the day, you'll benefit because projects will start flowing in from the network of people. Bear in mind that networking can take time. You don't just call a hundred people in a day and expect them to all give you leads and projects on the same day. No, it doesn't happen that way. You have to maintain in close contact with them, help them, talk to them, go out with them and establish a relationship with them. Once they know and trust you, they'll start throwing projects your way.

The result is even better than advertising in a printed media...say, newspaper because what's better – advertisements or word of mouth?

You've heard this a thousands times over, so, I won't say it again.

People in the freelance world like the phrase a lot – you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. So, remember that.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Other important things to your freelance business**

OK, we're now done explaining all about the selling and marketing things. But that's not the end of it, of course. There are loads more. If time and space permits, I could write an entire manuscript that would measure around the world at least twice!

Apart from selling and marketing, there are many other things that could either help your client decide to use you...or someone else.

It's no use being a top-notch seller with bad table manners because as soon as you get into a meeting with them and they don't like you anymore....you may have just handed the project over to your competitor...just like that.

We, as freelancers, have the shorter end of the stick. We are not able to hide behind a corporate image, flash a name card with a big corporate name on it or claim that we have twenty offices around the world. The only office we have is not even an office, theoretically speaking. And that is the reason why we have to walk the extra mile and make an extra effort to be professional about our work.

### **Bowling them over**

They, whoever they are, said that you will never get a second chance to make a first impression and they're right on the money!

We, as freelancers, must, **MUST** – make an effort to appear professional and conduct ourselves properly. When we talk about appearance or making a good impression, we're talking about our dress sense, shoes, nail polish color and hairstyle.

I am not going to deny this – yes, it is and no, it isn't. You see, it's a combination of looking right for your job, talking right for your job and also knowing all the right things for your job. If either element is missing, you're in for a ride. A rough one.

Potential clients look at freelancers and work at home people with a critical eye. They are ready to pounce on you when you make a trivial mistake or appear to have mixed business with pleasure....like chit-chatting with your kids on your mobile phone about their homework while in a meeting with your client. They would, then, readily assume that you're not the right person because you're not committed to your work. To them, they're thinking that your kids could easily take over your time...and they're paying you for your time.

Make an effort to appear as neutral and inoffensive as possible if you don't want to hop into your car and buy a whole new wardrobe for yourself. You don't have to make a transformation, just eliminate possible offending factors or attributes that you may have and you're ok.

### **Never be late**

And I mean never. I, as my husband can tell you, am not the most punctual person on this earth. And this has resulted in a couple of lost projects during my early months as a freelancer. And when I started doing some projects for him for free (and out of obligation), he started to point out some of the minor little faults that I had...one of them is that I am always late for something.

Being late just shows that you're not as excited about the project and potential income as you should be. And this turns the client off. They want you to be perpetually chirpy, inspired and excited about your work – and while it is difficult and damn near impossible to be so all the time, you can pretend.

Use an organizer to organize your meetings and deadlines well. Use a timeline to manage your projects so that you can easily inform your clients the stage you're at at the drop of the hat. Make it look as if you're right on top of **ALL** your projects – which is not possible if you become successful because once you've gained some success, you would lose track of everything!

Make it a habit to be a little bit early. Yes, it can be a complete waste of time if the client is not ready at the proposed time, much less earlier...but it will pay off.

This reminds of a time when I was actually **EARLY** (gosh, imagine that!) for a meeting. The client wasn't ready and she was in a meeting with her Managing Director. She informed the Managing Director that I was here early and that she should probably attend to me soonest possible. Instead of being angry about dragging his employee out of the meeting, he was impressed about my early-ness.

And they have been my steady client ever since.

Some people, like me, think that being early is like wasting time because sometimes we have to sit around in the meeting room or lobby (reception area), waiting for the person in charge to pop in. I would think to myself that I could be doing something else important - and then it occurred to me – yes, I **COULD** be doing something important while waiting.

So, instead of wasting time there admiring the ceiling decoration in your client's offices, bring along a notepad (I combine my notepad with my organizer), my laptop and my organizer. As soon as the client tells me that he or she is not ready, then I would simply whip something out to do. I make phone calls to remind my clients about payment, I doodle designs on my notepad so that I could just illustrate them into the computer when I get

home or I could schedule meetings with other clients while waiting!

So, it's not really so bad waiting anymore.

### **Speak properly**

Here, I will relate another experience to you. Before I started freelancing, my friend and I had an ad agency that was fully functional from both our homes. We advertised in a local daily for freelance writers and graphic designers and, boy oh boy, the **people we met!!**

It was an amazing experience because within the span of 12 hours, we met 10 people with different characteristics that either disgusted us or tickled us.

Me and my friend, both being writers, particularly couldn't stand the people who couldn't speak right. We didn't fault them if they had an accent but if they misspelt things in their application forms or made reference to the wrong word, it really looked bad. And I mean **REALLY** bad.

Then there were the ones who slobbered when they spoke, spit too! And there were those who flung their arms around a bit too much when they spoke. Another guy **HAD** to stand up to speak properly – and he spoke very carefully and slowly – which made up for his insistence on standing up while we were sitting down. I got myself a nice little neck ache after the meeting.

Whenever we're in a meeting with our clients, we have to make sure we first introduce ourselves, use a firm handshake (not one with a deathgrip), introduce ourselves and our business, don't sit until the client asks us to, think before we speak, don't 'erm' and 'ah' and then 'so' and 'I don't know', 'you know'. You **CAN** use those words, but don't overuse them.

In some cases, your potential clients might just decide that you're trying too hard to be cool, fashionable, pretentious – therefore, you have something to hide.

One other point I have to make here is the introduction part. Don't just introduce yourself – introduce your business too.

Don't just say “My name is Janet from GeoMan Inc”. The person might be digging around his or her mind for a “Janet” AND a “GeoMan Inc”. It's not too hard to just say, “Hi, my name's Janet, from Geoman Inc. We're a design company”. This way, even if the client doesn't remember you or your company, he/she may remember why a design company has decided to pop into her office, you see.

### **Presentations**

Not all of us are blessed with great presentation skills but this doesn't mean that having good presentation skills is a requirement and criteria.

Once again, it is a ‘yes’ and then a ‘no’.

Yes, it is a criteria. No, it's not the only criteria. If you are not very good with public speaking, if you tend to break out in cold sweat when you think about a presentation, you're not alone at all.

There are ways to hone your public speaking skills –and let this be a comfort, it's easier to speak on behalf of yourself as compared to speaking about other people or your employer. So, take comfort in the fact that you **WILL** eventually learn how to boast about your services and products! Trust me, it gets really easy after a while.

But one thing I learnt throughout my freelancing career is this :: during the presentation, spend 5 to 10 minutes on your products and services. Explain what you do, your background, your prices and suggestions only in that short period of time. Like I said, I normally give this section of the presentation 10 minutes **TOPS!** This, effectively, should take place at the beginning of the meeting/presentation.

The moment your clients are all seated, open your presentation materials (if you are using a laptop, make sure you set it up before every one of your client(s) are seated. So that they don't have to sit there staring at each other, waiting for you to boot up your PC!) and talk about yourself.

“Hello, good morning to all of you. My name is Marsha and I have been invited by so-and-so to introduce my services to your company. We've spoken very briefly on the phone the other day and we felt that by having this meeting or presentation, we could actually work some of the finer details out. So, let me start the ball rolling by introducing my services....I am a graphic designer and writer who is working from home. I have blah-blah-blah experience....etc”.

Talk slowly so that your clients don't have to ask you ‘Excuse me, can you say that again?’ or ‘Marsha, I didn't really get you the first time, can you please explain that part about ghost writing again?’

The reason why I said that it's important to squeeze your own info into 5 to 10 minutes is because let's face it, your clients are human (I sure hope they are!) and they are pretty impatient and selfish people....like all of us mere mortals. So, they basically want to know what **YOU CAN DO FOR THEM**. Frankly, they have better things to do than to sit around listening to you rattling on and on and on about your virtues and top-notch service and

amazing timely delivery....etc. They want **you** to know what **they** do and you can make a proposal to them.

At the end of your 5 minute rattling about yourself, just say ‘I have prepared a very detailed document to hand to you. I believe it will give you a very clear picture about what I do and my professional caliber. I think it is best that we proceed on to understand your industry now’.

They love it when you end your story and start theirs.

At this point, take out a notebook and start scribbling like crazy. Every single word that they say has to be important to you. When you scribble everything they say into the notebook or typing it into a word document in your laptop, they will start liking you more and more.

The entire process of presentation is about helping them buy into you, helping them speak about their business and their needs. Helping them solve their problems. Helping them feel that you are concerned about them. Helping them understand that they are important to you.

Many people make the mistake of just giving a 10-minute presentation and then end it with “We can call each other after this if you feel that I can give you value for money services”. By saying ‘if’ and leaving everything open-ended, you’re literally telling them that you don’t need their project and can live without them. If they want you, they should make the initiative to call you – not the other way around!

That’s like blowing up your own office. Instead, open the floor for questions and you answer them on the spot if you can. And then before you leave, tell them that you will call them a couple of days later to check on the status of their decision.

Is it important for us to use really expensive stuff to present to our clients? Not really. If you want to skimp on the presentation materials, make sure they look presentable. There was one freelancer I know of who printed her documents in recycled paper, thinking that the client won't bother much with the information and they will like the fact that she has an eco-friendly attitude. If you're skimping too much, the clients think you're being cheap, your presentation materials will eventually end up in the bin.

Everytime you hand out your own information or brochure, you want the recipient to keep it for future reference even if they don't need you right now.

So, use good paper, and a nice looking folder if you're not using a laptop. If you're using a laptop, fine, it's cool. But make sure that you set it up before all the clients are seated. This can be done when you reach the office. Inform the receptionist that you're here to meet so-and-so. Ask her to show you the way to the meeting or presentation room in order for you to set things up. This way, by the time the client reaches the meeting room, everything's ready to roll.

Simple things like that impresses the clients.

### **Always respond positively**

People don't like negative people, even if it's the awful truth.....now, **THAT's** the truth. When your clients ask something crazy and insane of you, respond positively, smile and always learn how to say 'yes'.

You see, there's a certain way of saying 'yes' but you're actually rejecting the person. 'No' always sound so crude, rude and unaccommodating.

Here's an example.

Jamie : Can you please do this completely free for me?

Helen : Yes, of course. But I don't think you'll be satisfied with just that free service because there are limitations. You'll be much happier, trust me, if you invest a little bit of money to get a better package.

Jamie : I want the pricing to be reduced by 80%

Helen : Sure thing. No problem. Let me work on it and I will give you the revised fee structure to look at. However, the package structure would have to change, I trust you know that.

Jamie : I want it tomorrow

Helen : Definitely. Timing is very important to you, I know. I can delivery it to you tomorrow, first thing in the morning. However, it'll only be 15% of the work. The balance can be delivered in another 2 days. I am sure it's OK with you.

You see, through those examples, Helen did not say the word 'no', not even once even when Jamie's requests were **ridiculous!** She was not negative at all and appeared to be accommodating to the client. However, if you read further into her answers, they are actually 'no' answers.

It's not an overnight skill because these things need practice. You can start practicing this on your kids, your spouse, your mother, father, sister, brother, cousins, neighbors....etc. When your kids ask you for that extra lollipop, say 'Yes, honey. Definitely, after dinner, ok?'

When your husband asks you to pass the salt, you say “Sure thing. Let me finish my pork chop first. I think the salt can wait”.

When your neighbor asks you to babysit their kittens, say “Sure, why not? Let me check with my husband”

If you do this a lot, it can even get quite fun. But use this wisely. Don’t contradict yourself. Don’t say “Yes, I can. But I can’t”.

**Learn to smile even when your toenails are being ripped off one by one.**

This is an essential skill to learn. It’s very much like the one before this – learning how to say ‘yes’ even when you mean ‘no’. Learning how to smile and look genuine is tough.

It is a skill **ALL** businessmen or women need to learn. And we all need to learn it really well because there will be times when you lock horns with a client or potential client, whether it’s over the design, the product, return of your products, pricing (especially PRICING) and you’re being cursed at. These are the times when you need to learn how to say things in a very direct manner, and yet in a smiling tone. If you get what I am trying to say here.

Saying it NICELY makes a whole lot of difference because it can actually turn an angry customer/client into a complaining/whining one. An angry one is a lost cause, a complaining or whining customer is a possible return customer. It all depends on how you handle that complaint.

The secret is to never point an accusing finger at any single direction. Keep your fingers and hands firmly inside your pocket. Listen and listen well. Say ‘yes, I understand’ or ‘You’re right, Mark. I totally believe you are right’. After that, you can do your explaining. Because when you say ‘I understand’ and ‘you are

right', it sort of makes them think that they are right and you understand.

You can then proceed to explain yourself and your side of the story...and then make amends.

That way, your unhappy customer or client remains faithful to you....hopefully...because you took the time to listen to his/her complaint and dealt with it there and then.

After this chapter, I am going to deal more with how to get your clients. And that, friends, is the very beginning of a very long, tough and difficult journey for a small business like ours.

My solution may not be yours – but let me share it with you so that you know how it is for me when I first started out. And hopefully, you'll find a solution from it or at least relate to the problems of a home-based business.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### *How to find the clients – clients, clients, where are you?*

There are many ways to get clients – some cost a lot of money, some of them are cost-effective, some don't cost a lot and some of them even cost the businesses nothing. It depends on the kind of exposure you're looking for.

And since we're talking about a freelancing career, we're also talking about limited resources in terms of time and funds. So, basically, we're not even keen to explore TV commercials, radio ads, print ads...etc. Even for Multi-National companies, budgets are strained and torn apart by humongous advertising plans. But if we were to indulge in a little of those big budget moves, we have to explore the potential response we would be getting from those campaigns and also how we would ever manage without external help.

And who are we to even look at radio ads, unless we're tying up with a large multinational company?

Let's start with just the basics.

- a. **Business cards** – Not many people realize how wonderful, powerful and cost-effective having a nice, presentable, professional business card can be.

Howard (not his real name) is a really successful businessman in his own right. He owns a chemical trading company here, in Malaysia, but he is often seen overseas attending to his businesses and spreading his business wings beyond the country of his origin. He is a wise man with traditional values – he knows how to develop business relationships with just about anyone, in my personal opinion.

However, being a traditional businessman, he doesn't know how to use his email and furthermore, he doesn't carry his business card around with him.

Of course, being a more technically-inclined person than he is, I asked him, "Howard, how can this be? Don't you think your customers would remember you better if they had your business card? And as and when they want something from you, they'll just drag the business card out from their card file?"

Howard smiled and just say, "They'll remember me. I treat them to a nice dinner, bring them out for entertainment and laugh a lot, please them, and make them think they are really important to me. They'll remember me".

I can't disagree with him. He is right, to a certain extent.

He goes all out to make a good impression with potential clients and he makes sure he makes it hard for them to forget him whenever they need him. But how would they reach him?

But to all of us new age entrepreneurs banking on the Internet for business survival, we need more than that. We cannot afford to take each and every one of our clients out for expensive dinners in 5-star restaurants, wine and dine them and make them laugh all the time. Most times, we're pretty face-less here on the Internet.

And that is why we have to have a business card that totally rocks!

Here, I will emphasize one point – **have it handy, anytime, all the time.** Have it in your purse, in your car, in your briefcase, in your wallet, in your bag and in your socks in you want! Just have it ready.

Generally, business cards don't cost a lot of money. Just keep giving it away. Give more than 1 away. Infact, I make it a point to give out at least 10 business cards a week.

To some, that's really quite little because I know a friend who finishes his business card supply (100 cards per box) in less than a month. His company asked him what he did with his business cards and he just said, "I give it away, that's what! What do you think I do with it?"

Excellent!

I can't begin to tell you how many times I have received phone calls from people whom I don't recall meeting because they saw my business card lying around somewhere. There was one time, I went to a mall with my kids and I saw a friend performing (he was Ronald MacDonald) and I just quickly slipped my call card into his pocket. It must have dropped out of his pocket because the next day, I got a phone call from his lady who told me she found my card on the floor of the shopping mall, near the stage and she needs a writer!

#### **b. Website**

Having a website for your business is almost a must these days. When I first started out, people had

websites to either write their own diary (now known as a blog) or publish their own articles or brand their products online. Only international businesses had websites during the early days on the Internet age.

Now, even ordinary people like you and me, have our own websites. If not to sell something, to promote our companies. If not to promote our own companies, to brand something. If not to brand something, it's just to publish our own writings and publish our online portfolio.

Not many people realize the full potential of a website and the Internet. The power is truly beyond our belief. There are so many things possible with the Internet that even the savviest of Internet gurus dare not proclaim to know everything there is to know about making money online.

There are so many uses for the Internet and I won't go into that here. Why is it important for freelancers to have a website? Great, the perfect question.

It is important for us to establish a connection with the potential clients, as simple as that. As a freelancer, we are basically homebound. Some of us try not to increase our expenditure by traveling out of the home too often. As it is, our charges are often less than what a normal company would charge. We're banking on the idea that our costs are lower, we charge lower.

Say, someone saw your business card and decided to call you. As you are the only person dealing with management, administration, execution, accounts, marketing, promotions and sales, tea-making, toilet-

cleaning, floor-mopping...you don't really have as much time on your hands to visit every single client as often as you wish you could. Unlike a large corporation where they have people with their own respective tasks and in this instance, their sales person or client-servicing staff would be at hand to answer the clients' queries. But as a one-man-show, we don't have the privilege of having such resources at our instant disposal. Some of us may have tie-ups with other larger corporations or individuals to carry out our sales and marketing activities for us, but most of us would find our resources lacking.

So, what is a starving freelancer to do to keep the client? Lead him or her to your website, of course!

In your website, you should have a short write-up about yourself, your work, your credentials, your resume (only if you want to) and **your portfolio!** The last being the most important. You should also include your pricing list in there, if you want. Some people would prefer to refrain from posting their prices in there for fear that their competitors would be lurking around to check prices and offer **YOUR** clients a much lower price.

A friend of mine has this similar said experience. She posted her pricing guide online and one unscrupulous competitor actually checked out her client base (under her portfolio) and then her pricing guide. The competitor wrote a letter to her current client offering a lower service, quoting her prices, for similar quality of work! She was hopping mad when she found out.

As an alternative, maybe you can also include a downloadable e-brochure or e-portfolio online that your potential clients can download. Or perhaps a good way to do it is to have a short form for the person who's requesting the information to fill out before you email or lead that person to the downloadable version of your brochure or pricing list. This way, you can track who has been given the link and who has downloaded the link.

Some of you may not know how to go about creating a brochure or pricing list to be downloaded. There are many recommended ways for you to create the document. One, to have it in plain old HTML format.

Format	Advantage	Disadvantage
HTML	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• easy to create and view</li><li>• no knowledge of programming or softwares.</li><li>• can be as fanciful and creative as you want.</li><li>• Can be made in FLASH format.</li><li>• Can include links to other sites or your site.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Copyable from the Internet</li><li>• Copiable and amendable</li><li>• If the design is fancy, download time can be frustrating</li><li>• Cannot be kept as ONE SINGLE FILE in the computer.</li></ul>
MS Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simple to use and create</li><li>• Anyone can view it. no need</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By far, this is one of the most popular format. But it is the least safe.</li><li>• Restrictive in design</li></ul>

	<p>extra softwares</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need programs to create it.</li> <li>• Can include links</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amendable</li> </ul>
FLASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive and interactive</li> <li>• Can include attractive images and sound</li> <li>• Can be viewed on Internet explorer and all other web browsers</li> <li>• Popular and very impressive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long download time over the internet</li> <li>• Cannot be saved from the Internet, need specific download</li> <li>• Difficult and time-consuming to create</li> <li>• Need knowledge of Macromedia Flash to create the file.</li> </ul>
PDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple layout and usage</li> <li>• Can be as attractive or plain as you want.</li> <li>• Can include links, pictures and text</li> <li>• Can be protected with a password to prevent unauthorised viewing</li> <li>• Can prevent others can copyind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to use softwares to create pdf.</li> <li>• Need to log into website to create the pdf document</li> <li>• Cannot include music, sound or voice-over.</li> </ul>

	and amending your files <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be created online at <a href="http://www.adobe.com">www.adobe.com</a> website</li></ul>	
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However, maybe all that advantage-versus-disadvantage of having an online pricing is irrelevant to you because you want your potential clients to know what your services would cost them before they write to you. If you asked me which one I would prefer to have, I would tell you that I prefer to use the pdf format.

Having an online brochure, pricing list or catalogue increases your chances of taking in a new client. Even if you're not physically available for them, you can still guide them through the process of downloading your brochures and reading your profiles and looking at your samples online.

Nowadays, there's an even more amazing tool – and I just started using it too.

You can include voice recordings into your website (it's called talking websites) and also you can hold conferences with your client over Instant Messenger or in a voice room (voice conference room). Take a look at <http://www.ttcglobaltalk.com> and you will get the basic idea of what I am talking about. It's not only cheap and affordable, the system is very easy to use and you can connect and talk with ANYONE without the ridiculous cost of long-distance phone calls.

Two of the most popular websites offering free Instant Messenger softwares are YAHOO and MSN. Both of them are equally good. If you're using HOTMAIL email, then you already have the passport (username and password) for MSN IM. Just go to <http://www.messenger.msn.com> and download the software.

As for Yahoo, it's a younger and hipper version of the MSN IM. Simply go to <http://www.messenger.yahoo.com> and download the software. Like MSN/HOTMAIL, you already have the username and password if you're using Yahoo! email.

By using a voice conference room, you can chat and speak to your potential client using presentation slides and html webpages. It's an **AMAZING** tool. Absolutely brilliant. Besides, it's a really cheap way of talking to people (in a group or individually) from all over the world at the same time!

### **c. Brochures**

You don't actually need to have a brochure specifically for each product that you have. Let's say you sell premium items, as in caps, t-shirts, pens, erasers, mousepads...etc. You don't have to have a brochure designed and printed for each of your product. Take the time to classify your products/services and group them out logically.

Think in terms of your client. If they're looking for wall calendars, what would they normally look for? If they're looking for t-shirts, they would normally look

for either a jacket or a cap, perhaps? Group them up and get it professionally designed.

I have seen some people use their Microsoft Word Document program to type out. It's all fine and dandy if we're not expecting to deal with a lot of big clients. However, we still want to maintain our image as a professional and credible freelancer. If we want others to take us seriously, then we need to tell them that we're **SO SERIOUS** about our work that we have invested some time and money into creating the most basic info sheet about ourselves.

No matter how we look at it, first impressions count for a whole lot. Some people take one look at your brochure, think it's not good enough, and even if someone else recommends YOUR services to them later on, they probably won't take you on because they have a bad impression about you. And in any business, that's a bad thing. So, invest a little bit of time and effort...and maybe some money too, to get your brochure, catalogue and other frontline marketing tools done in a presentable manner.

Freelancers graphic designers (like me!) are facing grave competition these days and it's really cheap to get us to come up with a decent design for your brochure(s). If you have limited budget, consider going to one of the graphic design schools to scout around for students looking to make some money for their books. The students are normally cheap and they give **EXCELLENT** service.

Pictures paint a thousand words – you've heard this saying. Make sure you have decent pictures taken of

your product or if you're offering services, at least make use of good pictures, for a start, to illustrate your business. But don't fill the whole brochure with pictures because you need to put some simple descriptions into your brochure too, to explain the process, the quality, your commitment to your work, the quality of your service, your credentials, your pricing...etc.

I make it a point to actually print my contact information (small or large) on all the pages of my brochure.

Make sure you do that. It's incredible. They see it the first time on the cover, they ignore it because they still don't know what you do. They see it again on the inside, then they see your services....they say 'hhhmmmm.....'. Then, they see it again on the information page beside the nice picture of that lady talking on the phone. 'I think I'll just give her a call and see if she can give me a good pricing for my cakes'.

I said earlier that we should all have our call cards ready to be handed out? Same goes for the brochure. Infact, I have my brochure printed in such a banner that it complements my call card. I can actually slip my call card into these four slits in my brochure and hand it out to the people who ask for my brochure or ask me, "So, Marsha. What do you do for a living?". I just shove the brochure into the hands and tell them, "Gee, I am glad you asked. Take a look at it and tell me what you think".

When you hand something like that to them and ask them what they think, the person will actually take the time to read it more carefully because what they say, it seems, is important. And when they read it carefully and the business turns into a topic of discussion, they'll remember you when they need you.

#### **d. Join networks and groups**

I don't particularly fancy this part of the marketing and sales activities of my business. It's not that I don't like people – infact, I am the exact opposite. I **LOVE** meeting people. I enjoy talking up a storm with new friends and just chatting about nothing with my chums. But intentionally networking with others is not my cup of tea. But I still do it anyway because I have seen it work.

How does networking work?

It's like this. It's a group of people from different industries getting together once every week to give each other leads for their businesses. We get to know each other and our businesses better by being forced to go out for lunch or dinner or something like that once every week. The network manager sometimes makes it compulsory for each member to mingle with another person from the group over lunch or dinner. Normally, the network manager would not allow 2 people from the same industry to be in the same group. The purpose is for us to get to know each other well enough and whenever we meet someone else who needs a lawyer or a real estate agent, we would automatically think of the person in the network group.

Word of mouth is, by far, the most powerful and effective marketing tool. You and I don't have to like it, but we just have to believe in it.

So, commit 2 days of your weekdays to meeting with people from your network group. One day to attend the network group and another day to eat lunch with a member of your network group to get to know each other better.

#### **e. Exchanging and Bartering**

We, freelancers, are working with limited budget here. So, we have to minimize our cost and maximize profits. So, it's logical to explore the idea of exchanging and bartering with others for the sake of promotion.

There was one time that one of my clients was holding a bazaar and sale. I didn't have enough money to book a booth and bring out all my stuff to be sold during the bazaar, so, I asked my clients this. "Helen, do you mind if I sponsor some bookmarks and booklets related to your industry for you to give out during your bazaar?". I printed my bookmarks and booklets at cost price and just sponsored it. I included my web address and my client's logo.

e.g. ABC Corporation in association with [www.creativejooz.com](http://www.creativejooz.com). This way, both of us win. I got the promo I want and my client gets these giveaway items for free. The cost for the promotion is not astronomical and we both benefit, it's an excellent deal.

#### **f. Talking about yourself**

When I mentioned this during one seminar, during the Q&A section, a kindly little lady no bigger in size than my elder son asked me, “But wouldn’t we be talking and talking and talking and they won’t be listening? Isn’t that like...you know, blowing your own horn?”

I answered her with this. You don’t have to blow your own horn and no one said you have to spend hours talking about the benefits of your services/products. Here are the rules. **Find opportunities** to introduce yourself, your business card, brochure or services/products to everyone you meet on a daily basis. You’ll just never know.

Tell them what you do, what your services/products are and where you sell it. Give them your brochure/catalogue, business card, phone number...etc and ask them to check it out. Ask them to call you if they **NEED YOUR HELP**. Then shut up.

All that should take no more than 10 – 15 minutes!! That’s not yakking.

After introducing yourself, change the subject and ask them about what they do for a living. If you find a chance to help them with your services/products again, THEN you say, “Hey, you know what? I know just the thing to solve your problem. You see, I’ve got this wonderful product that you might want to check out. What’s your email address?”. You get their email address and then you email them something, a picture, a brochure, a catalogue, a link to your website....whatever.

## **Networking**

Mention the word ‘networking’ and people often think about network marketing. While there’s absolutely nothing wrong with network marketing (I happen to think that network marketing is a brilliant concept), lots of people I knew will shrivel up like a prune and give me the kind of look that makes me feel a little bit like a garbage collector. It’s like they’re telling me, “Oh no, you’re not in that dirty industry, are you? No, I am not interested in buying garbage from you”.

But think about it for one second. Word of mouth is one of the most powerful marketing tools you will ever find anywhere on this planet. Nothing sells a product faster than credible recommendation or suggestions from friends, family and associates. You’ll be more likely to purchase something from someone if your sister told you about it, rather than you scouring the Internet or shopping mall for something you need but don’t know whether you can trust, or not, right?

Networking can be divided, basically, into 2 kinds. One, the offline kind and two, the online kind.

I am in favor of the online kind but I have to admit that there’s nothing better than meeting a person face to face and chatting about your business, your life and the things you do for a living.

Find networks and friends in the same industry...or related industries. Join them for gatherings, meetings, conferences or just discussions. Many networks have members from all kinds of industries and honestly, you can get loads of leads from people who know a lot of people.

Although I am no stranger to networking, I have only been recently introduced to ‘ryze network’. One of my epals, based in Penang, Malaysia who was an editor for an women’s website

who quit her job to be a work at home person, like me introduced me to Ryze.

Ryze is a business networking place where business people meet business people. I have tried Yahoo and MSN groups and none of them works like Ryze network.

I am not a partner of Ryze nor am I an affiliate. I do not gain anything from introducing Ryze network to people. But I will do so now because I want to share this with you.

This is how Ryze works. Ryze will you up with your friends online and friends of your friends can meet up and become friends. And then friends of your friends can meet up with friends of your friends' friends. You get the picture yet? It comes a whole circle and everyone eventually meets more people, get to know more industries and this – will eventually, most times, lead to more business leads.

This is an efficient way to market your products, introduce your services and to meet new friends! And the wonderful thing is that you can make friends in your PJs or in your evening gown...well, in your tux as well. It wouldn't matter.

But as mentioned earlier, it would probably be best to mix and match your online and offline activities. Most online activities have the support of their offline activities like gatherings, seminars, talks and also parties. Vice versa.

### **Advertisements**

Many big corporations benefit from a fat wallet – like having the freedom of advertising in the media of their choice. There's more to advertising than meets the eye – I should know, I am one of those people who are paid to come up with ads and branding exercises with one purpose and **ONE PURPOSE** only. To get

the money out of that wallet and into the clients' – and eventually, into my wallet as well.

But advertising is only for the big guns and unless you have a budget for it, or are leaning towards creating a new brand for your company, your products and services, then you're better off using other cheaper and more effective ways of marketing yourself.

You see, advertising, as it is well known, is not cheap. People, big guns, pay tens of thousands and millions of dollars to newspapers, advertising agencies and booking houses just to get their ads out. The advertising concept is complex and a lot of people sit around in a meeting room discussing consumer behavior, evaluating trends and fashion, they also sit around and discuss the best ways to **ENCOURAGE** you to buy something that you probably don't need.

Advertising in printed media is the real hard core marketing made for big companies with big budgets.

For the small fries like us, we're better off advertising in mediums that can drive us targeted traffic and also customers who are looking for us. Generally, advertisements reach a lot of people – too many people of all walks of life. This means to say that your advertisement is not necessarily reaching your target market. A lot of effort is being wasted here. For example, the newspaper circulation is about 13 million readers everyday. Sure, that's impressive. But how many people out of that 13 million are Porche car owners – if you're selling performance car parts designed for Porche cars.

So, if you look at it that way, advertising in the printed medium is not really cheap. It's expensive and yet it doesn't really reach your target market.

And that is also why I say advertising in magazines is more effective. More effective and more cost-effective.

If you're selling golf equipment, then it would work wonders for you to advertise in a golf or sports magazine. This way, you know you're reaching the people who are interested in golf and chances of them being interested in your product/services are higher.

Advertising in newspapers is like using a machine gun. You're shooting everywhere and everyone very quickly. But with a magazine ad, it's like using a rifle. You have only a few shots to get to your target, you get the picture?

Radio ads and TV ads are way too big for most of us small businesses. We wish we could have the flashy ads with pretty girls and guys acting out our advertisement scripts in a wonderful location...etc. but most of us don't have the budget for that. It won't be effective anyway because it's the same as the newspaper advertising method – the machine gun method.

If you had to and would like to consider using the TV medium, use the following:-

- a. **An infomercial.** This is something fresh that was designed a long time ago but only became popular recently. And infomercial is a commercial that is filled with information. Then subtly, your products are advertised in relation to the information. The company gets exposure when there's a voice at the end of the infomercial informing the viewers that '...this was proudly brought to you by [www.creativejooz.com](http://www.creativejooz.com)' or they could slot your short 10-second ad at the end of the infomercial.

The logic behind the infomercial concept is that viewers will remember your ad more because you provided them with useful information. People will automatically think that the company that produced this infomercial is the best company with the best products in relation to the topic. You're building on trust and credibility here.

It's a good idea for small businesses that wishes to advertise on TV to consider doing this instead of a general advertisement.

b. **Sponsorship of a program.** A friend of mine sponsored women's program some years back. She sells undergarments and during the program, they talked about the importance of wearing the right undergarment and health benefits of wearing the right size of bra and panties. They also discussed ways to get an accurate measurement yourself.

The program was a hit and her sales soared through the roof. Her sales got **SO GOOD** that she started complaining to me that there wasn't enough people working for her to meet the sudden surge of demands. Imagine that!

I guess the reason why it was a hit was because of the same reason why an infomercial is a hit. It deals with information, credibility and the viewers view the company sponsoring the program as an expert in the field.

c. **contests.** If you have a smaller budget but if you would still like to steal 10 or 20 seconds of onscreen time, you can sponsor a contest. Most TV companies would rather their advertising clients sponsor the contests but some are open to the ideas. Call up your local TV stations and cable networks to ask them about sponsoring some products for their contests.

**Radio ads**

To me, radio ads are more effective than TV commercials. One would automatically assume that something as costly as a TV commercial would be more effective when it comes to ROI (Returns On Investment).

But sadly, this isn't so true.

Why? Because in many traffic-choked cities all around the world, people spend many hours stuck behind the wheel. And with the current trend of everyperson-has-a-car attitude, everyone is literally alone in the car for a few hours a day. Simply said, every single day, there are just so many people bored senseless in a traffic jam with no one to talk to and have nothing much better to do than to listen to the radio. And since one would have to be awake and conscious during the entire boring drive to and from work (to avoid accidents, obviously), they are listening to the radio (and the ads, as well). And because there are less ads on the radio and also because the ads are shorter on air, people don't surf the channels (as in with television) as often too!

So, if your budget permits, you can and should consider using the radio as a medium for advertising. But only if your advertising/marketing/promotions budget permits that and if you feel that the ROI is good.

**Online advertisements**

- a. banner advertising
- b. content advertising
- c. newsletter advertising
- d. online commercial advertising
- e. affiliate marketing
- f. link exchanges
- g. search engine

- h. directories
- i. bartering banners/buttons/links
- j. sending samples out to online partners or affiliates

The list above is non-exhaustive because as everyone knows by now, as the seconds tick on, more and more ways are being developed by innovative people to create more ways for people to get their products/services advertised online.

The methods are literally non-exhaustive.

But let me run through some of them here with you briefly.

**a. Banner advertising**

At one point in time, banner advertising was the ‘in’ thing, you know. When the Internet was just a baby, getting banners advertised in big websites like Yahoo, MSN, AOL, and other localized websites and portals are great ways to increase website traffic.

But this is no longer true.

The novelty of the idea has waned and frankly, no one even notices if the website/portal has a banner, button or ad on it anymore. It seems as though people have decided enough is enough. Their eyes may see it but their brains no longer take in the information.

So, if you ask me if banner advertising is the way to go? I’d say no.

A person should only consider banner advertising if they are willing to pay an advertising agency a vast amount of money to manage the advertising itself. Normally, these agents would research your industry, explore ideas and decide **FOR**

**YOU** the websites to advertise your banners on. They are the ones, eventually, who would eventually be in charge of deciding when, who, how many and what to advertise on other people's websites. With the payment, there comes a guarantee of a certain number of new visitors or clicks to your site via the advertising.

**b. Content advertising**

By far, content advertising is one of the best ways to advertise on the Internet. Like infomercials, which bangs hard on the information effect, when a person writes an article, the reader (agree or not) will give you some credit or automatically assume that you're an expert in the field concerned. And if they like what you write, they are more than likely to buy something from you or use your services.

Content advertising works pretty much like this: you write an article on the topic of your choice. This article is offered for reprinting on websites of your choice, preferably in websites printing related topics of interest. If it's a portal, preferably in the section or category related to your industry/field.

At the end of the article, you should be able to get a byline – which means to say that there would be a short writeup about who you are, what you do for a living, your contact information and website url should be included.

This way, people who are interested or have read your article should be able to get to your website or find your contact information at the end of the article.

**c. newsletter advertising**

Newsletter advertising works pretty much the same way content advertising works. Here, you would be contributing your articles and content to other newsletters. In exchange for

the article, you get to place your byline and information at the end or at the beginning of the article.

This is also an effective way of getting the word out because people rarely subscribe to newsletters these days because of the unsolicited emails – we call this **SPAM**. But when they do, this often means that they are interested in finding out more about your products or are interested to be notified about your latest products and developments or updates to your services...etc.

So, since they have opted to receive the newsletter, everything that they read and see in the newsletter would be (generally speaking) of interest to them.

So, not only is this method free of charge but it's also extremely effective.

The secret is in finding where, who and what to advertise in.

#### **d. Online commercial advertising**

6 years ago, I was working with a dotcom (now a dot-bomb) that deals with high-speed online video productions. The company produces online broadband content for others and also content for viewers who would like to see the production online.

6 years ago, the development of broadband was not good, at least not in Malaysia. Surfing through the Internet was a total pain in the behind, much less streaming videos and audio content online. So here, we would rather read it.

The owner of the company has this vision – he knew broadband would bloom in our country because a telecommunications company in our country was widely

developing broadband connections. Soon, everyone can use broadband connection easily and affordably.

And his vision came true. I have to give the guy the credit. Even as an employee, I didn't have much faith in his prediction. And in the end, the company bombed because of terribly flawed financial planning but the idea was still a solid one. Advertising in an online commercial is relatively cheaper than other forms of online advertising. It's not practical for me to list the pricing packages here because as we continue to develop online advertising strategies and methods, the prices will continue to change. Therefore, the best way to research on online commercial advertising is to find out directly from companies offering such services.

**e. Online affiliate marketing**

How does this work? Well, an affiliate is someone you partner in such a way that both of you benefit. This method of advertising is particularly useful to e-commerce websites selling products or services with a relatively large profit margin.

It works sort of like a manufacturer of toys offering a profit margin to people who manage to sell their toys for them. With online affiliate marketing, you offer your affiliate a percentage of the profit in exchange for the promotion that they will do for you. It's a win-win situation.

**f. Link exchanges**

Regardless of what GOOGLE is doing to it's spiders or engines, if you have an online business or have a website, it's still a good idea to exchange links with others.

Why I mentioned Google is because Google (in 2004) introduced something they call 'page rank' – they lovingly

call it PR. The PR ranking is between 1 – 10. 10 for best and 1 for worst. Everyone tries to work their way up to PR 10 but it requires hard work and also a lot of patience. How does Google use the PR system? Well, in short, the more people who are linking to you, the better Google thinks you are. But the site that links to you has to have content or products that's relevant to yours or at least have **SOME** relevance. Not many people fully understand how google decides on what's relevant but we all agree that if you are selling cakes, a website selling web hosting is NOT relevant to your site.

On top of that the higher the PR of the linking site, the better your site will be. Let's say, a PR10 site links to your site, your site will automatically be promoted because a PR 10 site thinks you're worthy of being linked to.

Well, it sounds like messy business but once you get used to the idea, you'll appreciate the fact that the PR system does help, somewhat. But it has turned the world of Search Engine Experts upside down.

As said, even if Google decides to throw the PR system out the door, it's still beneficial to have links from other sites. Regardless, spiders of search engines will still look at linking rates to decide whether your website is good or not.

#### **g. Search engine promotion**

Search engine promotion should be an entire course by itself, an entire course that takes 3 years to take. But 3 years is too long for this course because the search engines change, change, change. They change because people change, habits change, preferences change.

And as long as people continue to change, the search engines will continue to change along with the people who use it to look for links and websites.

The topic of search engine is vast and impressively complicated one from a beginner's point of view.

But for a general overview, this is what can be said about search engine promotion. You have to keep in step with the search engine developers. You have to constantly keep yourself updated on what the search engines are doing because once the search engines change, people try to find out what have changed so that they can optimize their pages for the search engines. Then some will try to 'trick' the search engines into thinking that they have a swell website. The search engines figure this out and decides to...well, yes, change.

As a freelancer, optimize your website for keywords that you think interested customers will use to search for your site/products/services. For instance, if you are a writer, you would want to optimize your pages with words like 'words', 'write', 'writer'...etc. If you sell home-made cakes from home and have a website, then you would want to optimize your pages with words like 'cake', 'pastries', 'parties'...etc.

There are many other things you have to look into in order to optimize your pages like your META tags, links, alternate text...etc but we won't go into that here.

Once you have optimized your pages, you should submit your website to all the search engines you know. But be careful about site submissions. Some search engines will ban you from submitting if you have been submitting your site to their

search engines one time too many! And once you're banned, it's hard to get un-banned.

Some search engines allow you to submit more than 1 page, some engines permits multiple page submissions. Some search engines allows you to submit your website url only once. And some allows you to submit all the pages of your website individually in one day!

#### **h. Directories**

Many people think AOL and Yahoo works the same way. For those who are unfamiliar with Internet, Yahoo.com and AOL.com are popular search utilities people use to search for information on the Internet.

But no, AOL and Yahoo DON'T work the same way. You may use it the same way, albeit, inserting keywords of your choice into a search box and click 'submit' but their engines won't rank pages the same way. For one thing Yahoo is not a search engine. In the SEO world, Yahoo is known as a directory.

It's like an online Yellow Pages of websites. People manually insert their website addresses into Yahoo into the correct categories and sub categories.

Directories are exceptionally useful tools despite the fact that the 'technology' that they use may be somewhat old compared to others. But people still go to popular directories to search for websites and information that they want to look for because the results are more accurate.

So, don't forget to submit your website url to directories too.

#### **i. Bartering**

We're talking about bartering with other freelancers or home business owners. What is there to barter? Well, lots, if you're a work-at-home-preneur! As a home business, your time and effort is your wealth. And if you don't have the spare cash to spare, then spare your time. People will appreciate it. You can help others out at their exhibitions in exchange for a small seat for yourself and your business. During the event, hand out your leaflets and flyers and business cards to people who come around.

And how about bartering your design services for promotion through the partner's newsletter? That's free advertisement for something that you would have had to pay for.

Don't be surprised but a lot of freelancers are willing to trade and barter with others because they, too, like you, are low on budget. Some of them love to lend a helping hand to others simply because, as they always say, we're all in the same boat.

So, get connected with people in related fields or industry and ask them if they would like to trade or barter with you.

Of course, you can also barter banner space or button spaces in your website with others. This is a wonderful tool to 'buy' advertising space for your business. But how useful this method of advertising is depends on the number of visitors the partner site has compared to yours and also how interested people are of banner advertising at that point in time. However, if it's free, why not???

#### **j. Sending out samples**

Ever heard of [www.mompack.com](http://www.mompack.com)? No? Well, mompack is run by some home-based mothers who are reaching out to other mothers who are working from home, or running their

own businesses from home. These mothers are offering their help to other mothers because they all share the same cause. To be with their family/children more.

[www.mompack.com](http://www.mompack.com) works this way.

They have mothers who send out packs filled with fillers (stuff from other mothers/businesses) to their customers or people that they meet. They could be holding a workshop or exhibition and they want to have some packs to give out to people who come around to their workshop or exhibition.

To add value to the pack, they include fillers from other mothers! So, you can see mother sending call cards, catalogues, brochures, flyers, samples...etc to other mompackers.

This is a wonderfully cheap and effective way to market one self.

Especially if you're low on funds and in need of new business.

Another way to get new clients to is send your samples out randomly to people who know AND don't know. Who knows? You might hit someone who loves your products and will call on you when they see your samples!

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## **Chapter 5**

### **Keeping the existing clients**

Like finding new clients for your freelance business, keeping the existing clients happy is also a very important part of surviving in the freelance world. You need to keep your currents happy and also remind them that you're still around. Make them feel like they are the best clients in the world. And they will give you more business. Sometimes groveling takes place but I don't think it's necessary.

But statistics show that some groveling actually turns some clients off. So, if you want to grovel, make sure you grovel in a dignified manner – if that is at all possible!

Making your clients happy means that you have to invest some time in a good clients management database or system. Keep a record of the companies that you have served, the people you have dealt with, their information (their personal information too, if you have it), the client's birthday, how many children they have, their wife's or husband's name, their favorite color....etc. It all matters and if you're serious about keeping that client, you'd better make sure you have all that information...and more, if you want....and keep it handy too.

Using a simple excel spreadsheet will do, you don't really need a sophisticated program or software to maintain the list of clients.

Everytime you call on the client, make sure you have the computer on, the spreadsheet in front of you and your fingers ready to type. Or you could have a simple notepad in front of you and a pen handy too. When you speak to each other, note down things that you're talking about. And when they mention personal

things like going for a holiday, son is sick or dog is lost....write them down.

The next time you want to call them, open the spreadsheet and read through it before your call. You'll have all the topics ready to be discussed in front of you!

This tactic is nothing new because all network marketers use this. They are in the direct selling business and they know the best ways to get to someone personally. And frankly, I find this very useful. And some people are amazed that they have such good memories – but direct selling agents DON'T have good memories. They have a good system.

It's also good to send something special to your clients once in a while. Not your usual brochure or flyer that tries to push something to them the moment they open it but something 'special'. Like a bookmark, a pen, a T-shirt, a book, a calculator...etc. Something personalized would be great but even if you send something generic, your client will think you're a dear.

If they had a choice between someone NEW and someone DEAR, guess who'd they pick for the project.

I have a friend who sends all of her clients calendars and coupons that they keeps throughout the year. In the middle of the year, if she has enough, she will send them off to her clients with a small handwritten note. "Thought you'd find this useful".

Oh yes, one more rule about keeping your clients happy. Always try to write everything yourself. Forget about printing out the formal letters in the formal letterheads...etc. It just makes everything, the gift, so stiff and stuffy. You want to make it

memorable, spend some finger-power writing those stuff out yourself. Sign it off in big and bold letters, 'WARM REGARDS'.

Sending personalized T-shirts out, I figured this one out, is a wonderful way to advertise your business to more than one person. If you send a T-shirt with your name on it to your client, whenever the client wears your T-shirt, he or she is advertising your business for you! The same thing goes for caps and bags and anything that is visible to the public eye. It's an amazing way to advertise yourself to others. Other examples includes car stickers, bumper stickers, flags, notepads... etc.

Geoffrey is a friend of mine who runs his own web hosting business. He sent his clients T-shirts with a picture of a virus in the front. The back of the shirt says, 'The HOST is here' (as in host for the virus). Some people look at the picture (like me) and turn him around to look at the back. We look at the back and wonder what the words are saying cause we still don't understand. At the bottom of the shirt and on the sleeves of the shirt were the words, 'State of the art web hosting. No virus can ever get through'.

I may not have accurately quoted the line but it's something like that and I had salute him for coming up with such cute headlines. He should be the copywriter, not me.

Another home business owner sent hand-knitted and hand-sewn bookmarks, booties, bags and pouches to her clients. Working out all the things that she had to send out was a long wait but it was worth it. Almost everyone she sent her gift to was so happy with her that she was filled with project for the next year too.

Since we're on the topic of making clients happy, let's talk about one thing that don't make the clients happy. And that is being sent spam emails. That's one of the things that one hosting

company did to me. I was a client to them and they started sending me unsolicited emails the moment I signed up with their hosting program. I thought that was completely unprofessional. My repeated requests to be removed from the list were completely ignored. Infact the webmaster denied sending the emails out.

All I said to the hosting company after that was ‘adieu’. So, even if you’re tempted to, never send unsolicited emails advertising and marketing your products and services to your clients. First of all, they’re already your client, so, they generally know what your business and service is all about. Sending them further emails about your products and services, if they have not requested for it, is like pushing a chicken down their throat when their mouth is filled.

If you want to send emails to the clients, make sure you have included the option to remove themselves from your mailing list. This will ultimately soften the blow and if they get really mad at you, after being removed from your list, they may still give you business.

### **Making your customers come back for more.**

You can also use methods to entice them to use your services/products again, even if they’ve just used your products/services. You can dangle a carrot in front of them and ask them if they would like something else now.

For instance, say something like this,

“I really value your business and I think we can really work well together. And because I treasure you as a client, I wish to give you a discount of 30% off for the next product that I am offering to you. Considering the fact that my products are being sold at USD1,100 at retail, a discount would bring the price down to

USD770!!! Get it now because I don't want my other clients to find out that I am giving you such a crazy price. I will raise the price again in 2 weeks time. So, think about it, ok, and let me know”

The above message is simple and very direct. And most importantly, it is very personal. It speaks directly to the client and makes him/her feel that he/she is the only person you're offering this discount to. (If you're using an email to send this message out, remember to put the recipients into the BCC column. Otherwise, you'll make a boo-boo and reveal to everyone that you're actually sending out an advertisement!)

Another way to get customers to come back for more or remind them of your good services is to get their feedback. You can simply design a form with lots of questions on your services and products that you would want to ask your client.

A message like this would suffice.

“Hi there, Andy.

Hope this letter finds you in good health. Anyway, I am trying to fine-tune my company and it's products. And I truly appreciate your business last month, so, would it be possible for me to ask you to complete a very short and simple survey online. It won't take more than 2 minutes to complete. All I need is some very basic questions. You can log in here: <your survey url>

Thanks, Andy, for being such a wonderful client. Well, even if you decide not to complete the survey, I thought you could make good use of this notepad that I sending you.”

There's a double hit with this message. One hit is you're telling the client that he/she is a good enough client that his/her opinion

matters to you. They are likely to take you up on your offer. Then there's the notepad that you're sending. It's something small and may seem invaluable but it's always the thought that counts.

This rule is not only applicable to birthday presents. It's applicable in the business world too.

So, get going already with ideas on how to make your clients happy with you or remember you when they need you.

### **Conclusion**

I hope this book has helped you realize that freelancing and finding clients is not impossible. You wouldn't believe the number of people who keeps telling me that they want or wish to work from home all the time. The fear of uncertainty and lack of confidence is crippling. So, never let it cripple your efforts.

Even after you have started your freelancing business, there will be weak moments but if you keep at it and stick to it, it'll all work out.

Believe it, finding and keeping clients is not an easy task. It'll take a lot out of you and you'll sometimes think that you're not a businessperson after all. It's not true. No one is MADE or BORN a business-minded person. We all learn how to do that as we continue to grow and develop ourselves. Finding and keeping clients has a lot to do with networking and socializing and being nice and kind to others.

If you know how to do that, you're on your way.

**GOOD LUCK!**

marsha