

EXERCISE 1: Fight Panic With Logic

There is no better way to fight the panic of feeling like you don't have enough time than with an exercise that helps you determine your business timeline and when you must sort things out! Fight panic with logic.

What is the next deadline for financial purposes?

Date:

Amount needed:

Do I have enough in the bank to meet that deadline?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What goal am I trying to achieve most?

☐ Pay my bills

☐ Apply for a freelancing-related job

☐ Practice pitching and applying for jobs

I am tempted by this job because (choose as many as you want):

☐ It will help me bring in some extra cash

☐ It looks exciting and profitable

☐ It will help me put my freelance skills to work

☐ I'm worried about paying my bills

Does this job help me achieve my goal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

☐ Other

Explain:

Is this job within my freelance niche? Will it allow me to put my skills to work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sort of

If I get this job and it's exactly how it looks, will I be happy with it?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sort of

Will I be happy doing this kind of work long-term?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sort of

Reread all of your previous answers and think about them for a few minutes. Then...

Is applying for this job a logic-based decision or a panic-based decision?

☐ Logic-based

☐ Panic-based

Do I still want to apply for this job/try the clickbait?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sort of

EXERCISE 2: Look For the Signs

Don't judge a book by its cover. Or a freelancer by the amount of struggle they have on the job. Differentiate between TEMPORARY conditions and PERMANENT traits to help you see how awesome you are.

Examples of TEMPORARY conditions

My clients are difficult
to work with

I have too few/many
deadlines

I haven't had a day off
in weeks/months

Examples of PERMANENT traits

I am no longer a freelancer (career
change) I am incapable of doing my job

What challenges am I facing right now? Are these TEMPORARY (T) or PERMANENT (P)?

1. T/P

2. T/P

3. T/P

4. T/P

5. T/P

What makes each of these TEMPORARY or PERMANENT?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What is 1 TEMPORARY condition I can change? How?

What is 1 PERMANENT trait that you want to keep?

EXERCISE 3: Find the Struggle

The struggle is all around us, despite what the sparkly and perfect online world would like us to believe. So, let's transform into adventurers and find the struggle out there, hiding in plain sight for us to see!

Start by choosing a search engine and typing in "*tips for struggling freelancers.*"

What are the first 3 hits that you find?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do these look like signs of success?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

Could these be interpreted as signs of a struggle (past or present)?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

Go to your favourite social media website. Search for "*freelancer tips*" or "*freelancer groups.*"

What are the first 3 hits that you find?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do these look like signs of success?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

Could these be interpreted as signs of a struggle (past or present)?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

Click on the hit that appeals to you most and look at reactions and comments on it. What are they signalling to you (choose all that apply)?

- ☐ They are trying to help fix the OP's problem ☐ They are empathizing with the OP

☐ They acknowledge that they have had similar problems in the past

☐ They are ignoring the OP and just posting tips, suggestions, or advice

☐ Other

Explain:

Go to a forum-based website such as Reddit. Search for *"freelancer venting"* or *"rants freelance life."* Check every option that you find on the list of results.

☐ A freelancer needing to vent (it doesn't matter about what)

☐ A freelancer asking questions

☐ A freelancer looking for advice or feedback

☐ A freelancer talking about a frustrating experience

How do you feel having found these kinds of posts online? How does that compare to when you went on a search engine and tried the same thing?

EXERCISE 4: See Your Worth

You are much more valuable than you think you are. Use this exercise to help you zoom out and look at yourself with fresh eyes. To get the best results, do it alone first, and then read the questions and answers to a friend or trusted person and record their reaction.

Describe your freelance career.

How long have you been working as a freelancer?

How many hours per day do you work?

How many days per week do you work?

How much do you earn per month/year? TIP: If you don't want to get specific, just say you earn under a certain amount. Ex: Under \$1 000 per month or \$20 000 per year.

\$

What are 3 of the biggest challenges you've faced in your career?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are 3 roles in your job that someone not in the business may not know about?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now, tell someone you trust the answers to these questions. If you feel comfortable, ask them this follow-up question: Did any of these answers surprise you? Why?

Pay attention to their body language and facial expressions. What emotion/reaction did they seem to show (choose as many as you'd like)?

☐ They seemed
impressed

☐ They seemed
surprised

☐ They seemed
interested

☐ They seemed
bored

☐ They seemed
envious

Did they say anything that surprised you? Why did it surprise you?

Does their reaction to your answers on this worksheet change how you see yourself?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ A little bit

EXERCISE 5: Get To Work Your Way

This worksheet will help you figure out just what skills and advantages you have in your toolkit to help you branch out and put yourself to work in a way that will help you further your freelance career. This helps you see which path to take when there are too many options at the intersection.

What are the main roles/responsibilities in my freelancer career?

Can I put these kinds of skills to use in another job?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

What are 3 paths available I can consider for my freelance career?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Pick your favourite one. Now list 3 reasons why you chose that one.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Does this choice seem too good to be true?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

Will this path take a lot of time?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

Is there an actionable result that will help my career?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

Take 10 minutes and research your preferred path to ensure that it meets the requirements from above as far as you can tell. Go as deep as possible to see what you'll learn. What are 5 things you can expect to learn from your chosen pathway?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4.

5.

Do you still want to consider this a realistic and actionable step?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

How long will it take to learn how to do this (estimate in weeks or months)?

weeks/months

What will success look like?

EXERCISE 6: Freelance Budgeting 101

Very few people like budgeting, but it's a necessary evil. Freelance budgeting may look a little different than your classic spreadsheet. So, let's take a detailed look at a freelance-based budget.

Month of:

Year:

Top budgeting reminders for freelance budgeting:

- Plan for low queue months
- Budget based on ACTUAL earnings, not PREDICTED earnings
- Don't forget business expenses

What did you earn this month?

\$

What will you bring home after expenses?

\$

Is this amount HIGHER or LOWER than usual?

☐ Higher

☐ Lower

☐ Average

Was this month BUSY or SLOW compared to regular queue traffic?

☐ Busier

☐ Slower

☐ Average

How much can you put aside for a slow queue month?

☐ 20% \$

☐ 15% \$

☐ 10% \$

☐ 5% \$

How much do you have available to spend on essentials?

\$

You worked hard and now deserve a treat! How much can you take off that last number to reward yourself?

☐ 20% \$

☐ 15% \$

☐ 10% \$

☐ 5% \$

What bills were you able to pay using your freelance income? Remember that PARTIAL payments count!

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Existing debt | <input type="checkbox"/> Rent/Mortgage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance (Car, health, business, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Groceries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Power/Utilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Vet/Medical care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas | |

Could you pay MORE or LESS than usual?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> More | <input type="checkbox"/> Less | <input type="checkbox"/> Average |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Reminder: During BUSY months, stock up on unaffordable essentials for SLOW months. Some examples include:

- | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Brownie mix | <input type="checkbox"/> Pasta | <input type="checkbox"/> Rice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shampoo, soap, etc | <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee | <input type="checkbox"/> Spices | <input type="checkbox"/> Salad dressing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canned food, soup, etc | <input type="checkbox"/> Bread | <input type="checkbox"/> Pasta sauce | <input type="checkbox"/> Cereal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Peanut butter | <input type="checkbox"/> Popcorn | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen pizza | <input type="checkbox"/> Jam | <input type="checkbox"/> Oats | |

EXERCISE 7: See Your Success

We are trained to look for success in significant social media-ready ways. Take on the challenge of finding as many daily successful things as possible. Much like gratitude exercises, these will change your outlook from struggling to successful.

SUCCESS IDEA BANK

Got 1 new hit to your website/profile Got 1 new message or email

Worked on my website/platform for at least 15 minutes Got 1 new order in the queue

Helped a non-customer find a solution to their problem Networked/Hunted for jobs for at least 5 minutes

How do you feel about your day today?

☐ It was a good day ☐ It was a bad day ☐ It was neutral

What is one POSITIVE takeaway from the day?

What is one NEGATIVE thing you're feeling frustrated about today?

What is one success you experienced today while working (don't forget to use the idea bank above if needed)?

How did it make you feel (happy, exciting, humorous, etc.)? Why?

EXERCISE 8: Bullsh*t Bingo: Freelancer Edition

Bullsh*t Bingo, AKA Buzzword Bingo, is a hilarious and fun game where you create your own Bingo cards based on bullsh*t (hence the name) that happens during your day/week/month. Fill your card with annoying or almost certain situations that can and will happen during your day/week/month, and colour the square in when you reach it!

SAMPLE CARD OPTIONS

Got asked about my clearly-listed prices

Got asked a question on my FAQ page

Got asked for a free extra/gig add-on

Was expected to do a free revision

Was expected to do extra revisions

Got asked to deliver early

Got asked to offer a discount

Got called stupid

Got called incompetent

Got a new email at 2 am and then a follow-up an hour later, wondering why I hadn't responded yet

Make yours as customized to your freelance domain as possible! Remember, the stupider and more annoying, the better.

BINGO!

Here are some winner suggestions, but customize to whatever you love most!

Watch a movie or TV show for 2 hours

Plan a fun outing with friends or family

Browse the internet for 1 hour (fun stuff only!)

Cook your favourite meal

Nap for 1 hour

Make a dart board out of your worst customer and attack it

REMINDER: Take your reward! Don't put it off to another time when you "need" it. You put up with a lot of bullsh*t to win, so take your reward now, damn it!

BINGO CARD

EXERCISE 9: Set Your Worries On Fire

Worrying can eat away our energy and focus. So, we're going to set our worries on fire. First, we have to write them down and do a little work. Then we get matches!

What are your top 5 worries right now?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | |

What are the top 3 most realistic/bothering you the most today?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | |

What is the worst-case scenario for each of these?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | |

What is the best-case scenario for each of these?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | |

What are your top 5 favourite moments from your freelancer career to date?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | |

BONUS: Read your reviews for a little extra happy juice

Now for the fun part!

LIGHT 'EM UP!

- Write your top 3 worries (or all 5) below
- Decorate them however you want to
- Light them on fire SAFELY and watch 'em burn

OR

- Rip them up
- Let your pet pee on them
- Throw darts at them
- All of the above

EXERCISE 10: A Day In Your Freelancer Life

Do you think you have room in your schedule for more freelance work? Think again! Use this exercise to help you account for every moment and see just how little free time you have.

What time did you get up today?

What time did you start work?

How many hours did you work
(excluding breaks)?

How many breaks did you take?

Did you have a full day's worth of work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you DIDN'T have a full day's worth of work, did you do anything to stop it (i.e., Reject an order, take your services offline, etc.)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Did you spend time networking today (at least 5 minutes)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Did you spend time job hunting today (at least 15 minutes)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you had any fun time today after work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How many meals have you eaten
today?

What time will you go to bed
tonight?

Will you get at least 5 hours of sleep?

☐ Yes

☐ No

So: is there any time left in your schedule for more work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

EXERCISE 11: Potato, Potahto Financial Planning

What works for you may not work for someone else, and vice versa. Take a few minutes to plan your finances and see whether retained and long-term clients are as profitable as one-off and piecework clients!

What is your preferred monthly income amount?

\$

What rate do you charge for piecework (per piece or hour)?

\$

What rate do you charge for retainer or contract clients (per piece or per hour)?

\$

How many piecework clients do you get per month, on average?

How many hours per month do you spend on piecework?

How many retainer or contract clients do you have?

How much do you earn from retainer or contract clients (total)?

\$

How many hours per month do you spend on retainer or contract work?

With that in mind, which of these approaches earns you MORE for LESS working time?

☐ Piecework clients

☐ Retainer clients

☐ It was a tie

REMINDER

- Don't assume you have to go with ONLY one or the other
- Diversify your income as much as possible for stability and security
- Make changes when you have to protect your bottom line and your time

Exercise 12: Success Done Your Way

Don't let someone else's seemingly perfect green grass make you feel like your own lacks something. Success will look different for each person. Make decisions based on YOUR definition of SUCCESS and SACRIFICE.

What are 5 traits of success for your freelance business?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Does your business currently have these traits of success? Why or why not?

What are 3 sacrifices you're okay with making to get to that definition of success?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are 3 things you WON'T sacrifice to make your business successful?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Would you consider your business to be successful based on your answers above? Why or why not?

EXERCISE 13: Become Smiley, Happy, and Silly

When the money just isn't there to have paid fun, let's take some time to find some free fun! Plus, we'll make time and space for your paid fun list to be ready when the cash allows it.

IDEA BANK

Watched a funny cat/dog/animal video	Drank a cup of coffee before it got cold	Had 5 minutes to just "be" in my space	Cuddled a cat/dog/animal
Finished/Started reading a book on my TBR pile	Ate some chocolate/other good food	Binge-watched a good TV show	Added some items to a wish list/shopping cart

What was one positive thing that happened today (use the idea bank above if you need help)?

How did that one thing make you feel (i.e., it made me smile, roll my eyes, etc.)?

Is there room in the budget for paid fun?

☐ Yes

☐ No

My "when I have money" fun list

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

EXERCISE 14: Create Your FUNday

Your mission is simple. You must create a fun day for one specific day in your schedule. Whether it's a full day or you decide to do one fun thing PER day, you do you. Don't forget to change it if you start to get bored!

Are you going with one FUNday or a series of fun exercises per week?

☐ One FUNday

☐ One fun thing per day

What activities will you do on your FUNday?

-
-
-
-
-

What fun things will you do this week?

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

What are the top excuses to stop you from having fun?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How can you REDIRECT each of these excuses to deliberately make time for fun?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

EXERCISE 15: Find Your Safe Space

There's nothing worse than having to pretend you feel a certain way when you don't. Consider this your cheat sheet for taking off that smiley face mask and being open about how you really feel and what you are really thinking.

How are you feeling right now?

What are the top 3 things on your mind?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do you want companionship right now?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

Do you have someone who can be there with you and for you if you want?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

If so, reach out and get the companionship that you need. If you don't have someone or don't WANT companionship right now, keep going for more options.

Get outside your head for some fun:

- Call a loved one
- Reach out online to a penpal or friend, or colleague
- Join in on a social gathering
- Help a friend or loved one with something (ex: packing, painting, grocery shopping)

Find someone who will dedicate time to you for those heavier times:

- Set up an appointment with a counsellor
- Consider online counselling
- Talk to someone you trust

Seek out “your people” when you need someone who just *gets* it

- Take a look at online forums (ex: Reddit)
- Join a support group (ex: Search for @TheStarvingFreelancer on Facebook)
- Look for a retreat or program for freelancers

Freelancing is one of the most popular non-traditional careers out there. You are never alone and never have to pretend to be anything other than yourself, regardless of how you may feel in your best and darkest moments!