

THE SUCCESSFUL FREELANCER

**HOW TO OVERCOME
FREELANCING CHALLENGES**

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"You are a potential genius; there is no problem you cannot solve and no answer you cannot find somewhere."

Brian Tracy

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PREFACE

In 2006, I was working for a Dutch software company. With nearly a decade of experience as a programmer and project manager, I thoroughly enjoyed my job. Coding, database planning, designing logical algorithms, and continuous learning were my daily highlights.

So one day, I said to myself: "Why work for someone else? I'll start working as a freelancer, working for myself, being my own boss. It's easy, I'm a pro with more than ten years of experience; I'll just do the same thing, only for more money."

I woke up thrilled the following day, ready to kick-start my freelance career. And then reality hit me. I needed a client, which meant I had to market myself. I also had to understand taxes, accounting, management, and operations—roles I knew nothing about. Suddenly, being a freelancer felt like running several departments simultaneously.

Over time, through trial and error, I gradually acquired the knowledge and skills needed to navigate these challenges. This learning process was not only about surviving; it was about thriving as a freelancer and, eventually, as a small business owner. Now, years later, with my amazing colleagues and a few exceptional freelancers, we are working on diverse and rewarding projects, from enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems to medical software and online platforms for accounting and time management.

This book is a compilation of the challenges I encountered during these years and the strategies I devised to overcome them. Having seen the same problems as both a freelancer and an entrepreneur collaborating with freelancers, I've gained a unique perspective on understanding and resolving them.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into six key sections, each dedicated to a department vital for successful freelancing:

MANAGEMENT

SALES AND MARKETING

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

FINANCE

PRODUCTION

Within these sections, you'll encounter challenges specific to each department. Every challenge is described, followed by one or more practical solutions designed to help you navigate and overcome these hurdles.

This structure is crafted to clearly guide you through the complexities of freelancing and offer actionable steps to enhance your career trajectory.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

To effectively utilize this book, I suggest you first read it from cover to cover. This initial read-through allows you to form a comprehensive understanding of the range of the challenges discussed. After acquainting yourself with the content, you can delve deeper into specific sections that resonate most with your personal freelancing experiences or areas where you seek improvement. Approach these segments on your second read as if you were studying a textbook, actively noting down your thoughts and how you might adapt the proposed solutions to your unique circumstances. This systematic approach encourages a deeper engagement with the material, fostering a more personalized and practical application of the advice given.

Additionally, while revisiting chapters, writing down your ideas and how you plan to implement the strategies discussed can significantly enhance your learning process. This active engagement ensures the solutions are understood and tailored to your needs and challenges.

As you read through this book, you will notice certain themes being repeated, such as the importance of good communication, having goals, and creating your brand via your website and social media. I have repeated this information on purpose in order to explore these central themes from slightly different perspectives and to reinforce how crucial they are to your successful career as a freelancer.

If you have any questions or a topic you'd like to delve deeper into, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am happy to engage in thoughtful discussions and further develop the subjects I've touched upon in this guide. Your insights and curiosity are valuable to me, and together, we can broaden our understanding of these complex yet fascinating topics. You can easily contact me through my website at

mygoalsachieved.com. I eagerly look forward to hearing from you and exploring new perspectives together.

SETTING THE SCENE

In the dynamic landscape of the 21st-century workforce, freelancing has emerged as a popular career choice. Statistics show an encouraging trend for freelancers; however, the competition is fiercer than ever. As a freelancer, success isn't just about being exceptional in your field. Success is about wearing multiple hats, each representing a different department in your business: Management, Sales and Marketing, HR, Customer Relations, Finance, and Production.

Management: This is where you steer the ship. From making strategic decisions to managing your time and projects, this role requires you to be organized, efficient, and proactive.

Sales and Marketing: Promoting your services, negotiating contracts, and closing deals. It's about knowing your worth and effectively communicating it to potential clients.

Human Resources (HR): As a solopreneur, you're your own HR department. This involves taking care of your well-being, continuous learning, and possibly managing other freelancers if a project demands it.

Customer Relations: This is all about people. Building and maintaining relationships with clients, understanding their needs, and ensuring their satisfaction is crucial in this role.

Finance: Here, you're tasked with managing budgets, tracking expenses, setting rates, and ensuring profitability. It's about maintaining financial health while delivering quality work.

Production: This is your core area of expertise, where you create the products or services you offer your clients. Mastery and continual improvement in this area are essential.

Every chapter of this book is dedicated to one of these departments. They are teeming with challenges you might face along your freelance journey. But worry not, for each challenge comes with practical solutions that you can implement. From management strategies to financial tips, from production hacks to marketing techniques—this book is designed to equip you with the tools you need to thrive in the competitive world of freelancing.

MANAGEMENT

WORKING TOO MANY HOURS

Choosing to embark on the journey of being a freelancer naturally implies a passion for the work you're doing. There's a particular joy and satisfaction that comes from immersing yourself in tasks you genuinely love, so much so that time seems to lose meaning. As you sit down to work, you savor every moment, with the rest of the world fading into the background. You're engrossed, you're focused, and you're happy.

However, as idyllic as this may seem, there's a flip side to this coin. This intense immersion and disregard for time can lead to an inevitable consequence: burnout. The thing about burnout is that it doesn't happen suddenly. It creeps up on you, gradually eroding your energy and enthusiasm. Over time, you'll notice a decline in your productivity levels. The quality of your work, once impeccable, will start to falter.

The very work that used to bring you joy and satisfaction will slowly morph into a heavy burden, weighing you down. The love and passion that once fueled your freelance journey could begin to feel like chains, tying you down and sapping you of your creativity and drive.

Therefore, while losing yourself in your work is wonderful, it's equally important to strike a balance. Even the most enjoyable work can lead to fatigue and burnout if not managed properly.

Overcoming the Challenge

Make yourself a strict time schedule

Setting and sticking to a rigorous timetable for your work hours is vital. This means designating specific time slots in your day solely dedicated to your freelance work. Once those predetermined "working hours" have concluded, you should step away from your professional role and obligations.

This stepping away isn't merely about physically distancing yourself from your workspace. It's about mentally and emotionally disconnecting from your work as well. You must refrain from reading work-related emails or checking your professional social media accounts outside your stipulated working hours.

It's important to remember that the world will not cease to function if you take a break. Your clients won't disappear, and your projects won't fall apart if you spend some time off enjoying activities that have nothing to do with your work.

These breaks, these moments of disconnect, are not just about relaxation or leisure. They serve a much more significant purpose—they help recharge your mental and emotional batteries.

Define a workplace

Establishing a distinct and dedicated workspace is an effective strategy for managing work-life balance, especially in a remote working setup. Depending on your living situation and available resources, this workspace could take various forms. It might be an entire office room explicitly designed for your professional activities or a designated area in a different room, such as a table in your bedroom.

The key element is that this space is solely used for work-related tasks. When you enter this workspace, it should serve as a signal to your brain that it's time to switch into work mode, allowing you to concentrate fully on your professional obligations. This physical separation helps create a mental divide between your work life and your personal life, which can improve focus and productivity during working hours.

However, it's equally important that once you step away from this designated workspace, you truly disconnect from work. Rather than working non-stop, devote your off hours to pursuing hobbies, spending quality time with family and friends, or simply relaxing.

Creating this explicit boundary between your work zone and personal life can be instrumental in staving off exhaustion and fostering a balance between work and leisure.

Learn to say NO

One of the most challenging yet essential skills to managing work-life balance is learning to say no. While it's natural to want to satisfy your clients' needs and exceed their expectations, this shouldn't come at the expense of your personal happiness, health, or relationships.

Saying no isn't about being uncooperative or unhelpful; rather, it's about setting realistic boundaries for yourself and others. It may involve tactfully refusing impractical deadlines or politely turning down requests from overly demanding clients. This might seem daunting initially, but with practice, you'll find it becomes easier and even empowering.

When you prioritize self-care and ensure you're not overworked or stressed, you're not only benefiting yourself, but you're also enhancing the quality of service you provide to your clients. By nurturing your mental and physical health, you can maintain a revitalized and sharp mindset for your daily work.

The following email templates may assist you with this. You can also download them from mygoalsachieved.com/email-templates.

@ Email template to refuse an unrealistic deadline

Subject: Re: Project Deadline Discussion

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope this message finds you well.

I am writing regarding the proposed deadline for the project [Project Name].

After reviewing the project requirements and the time necessary to deliver quality work, I am concerned that the current deadline might be challenging to meet. The complexity of the tasks involved requires careful attention and thoroughness, which might necessitate more time than initially anticipated.

Extending the deadline would ensure the high-quality outcome we both aim for and prevent any potential rush that might compromise the final results. I propose we move the deadline to [Proposed Date], allowing ample time to meticulously cover all aspects of the project and deliver a product that meets your expectations.

I understand that timelines are crucial, and my primary goal is to deliver the best possible output. I look forward to discussing this further and finding a mutually beneficial solution.

Thank you for your understanding, and I appreciate your flexibility on this matter.

Kind regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information]

@ Email template to refuse overly demanding client

Subject: *Re: Recent Project Requests*

Dear [Client's Name],

I hope this message finds you well.

I am writing to discuss your recent requests concerning our ongoing project.

While I greatly appreciate your enthusiasm and dedication to achieving the best possible outcome, some of the demands presented are challenging, given my current resources and commitments. Balancing the quality of work and managing time effectively is my top priority, and I want to ensure I continue to provide you with the high standards of service you have come to expect from us.

In light of this, we may not be able to accommodate all the additional requests at this time. We can certainly revisit these in the future or explore alternative solutions that meet your needs while keeping within our agreed scope of work.

I understand this might not be the ideal response you were hoping for, but I assure you that this decision was made to preserve the quality of the work we deliver.

I appreciate your understanding, and I look forward to our continued collaboration. Please feel free to reach out if you wish to discuss this further or if there are other aspects of the project you would like to explore.

Kind regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information]

DIFFICULTIES ESTIMATING THE TIME NEEDED FOR A TASK

Accurately estimating the time needed for a specific task can be challenging yet vital to your job. It's not simply about figuring out how long the task will take, it's also about understanding its complexity, anticipating potential hurdles, and evaluating the level of effort required. Misjudging any of these elements can lead to either overestimating or underestimating the time needed, both of which are fraught with significant risks.

If you underestimate the time required, you might find yourself in a high-pressure situation, racing against the clock to meet the deadline. This rushed approach could undermine the quality of your work, making it susceptible to mistakes and potentially harming your reputation with the client. Moreover, it could force you to work longer than anticipated, leading to burnout and impacting your capacity to take on new jobs.

However, overestimating the time needed for a task isn't without problems either. It could result in times when you're doing nothing, which means losing chances to work on more tasks and increasing your earnings. Additionally, clients might view you as inefficient or too expensive if tasks routinely take less time than predicted.

Overcoming the Challenge

I recommend taking the following six steps to help you come up with a workable timescale:

1. Divide the entire project into smaller, more manageable sections.
2. Take these smaller parts and break them down further into individual tasks. These tasks should be specific enough that

you can estimate how long each one will take with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

3. Once you have your list of tasks, start estimating the time for each task one at a time. Be as specific as possible with your estimates to ensure they're accurate.
4. It's important to remember that we often underestimate how long tasks will take. We forget about steps like testing, correcting errors, and dealing with unexpected issues that might arise. In order to compensate for these things, multiply each task estimation by a specific value. I find 1.5 works best for me, but you might need to experiment with different values to find the one that works best for you.
5. After you've estimated all the individual tasks, add them together to get your final estimate for the entire project.
6. Add an additional 10% to the final estimate. This extra buffer accounts for time spent communicating with the client, preparing the necessary documentation, perhaps teaching the client how to use the end product, and any other miscellaneous tasks that often get overlooked in initial estimations. This way, you're fully prepared for every aspect of the project.

Example:

You have been asked by a client to write an e-book about the three most used time management techniques.

My breakdown of the project would look like this:

1. Find the three most used time management techniques
2. Research technique 1

3. Write technique 1
4. Research technique 2
5. Write technique 2
6. Research technique 3
7. Write technique 3
8. Revise technique 1
9. Revise technique 2
10. Revise technique 3
11. Proofread the book
12. Format the book

See the table below for my estimate:

Tasks	Estimate (real) Hrs.	Estimate (multiplied) Hrs.
1. Find the three most used time management techniques	3.00	4.50
2. Research technique 1	10.00	15.00
3. Write technique 1	5.00	7.50
4. Research technique 2	10.00	15.00
5. Write technique 2	5.00	7.50
6. Research technique 3	10.00	15.00
7. Write technique 3	5.00	7.50
8. Revise technique 1	3.00	4.50
9. Revise technique 2	3.00	4.50
10. Revise technique 3	3.00	4.50
11. Proofread the book	6.00	9.00
12. Format the book	4.00	6.00
TOTAL	67.00	100.50

Total estimated hours: 100.50 Hrs.

My offer for the client: $100.50 + 10\% = 110.55$ Hrs.

You can download a spreadsheet template called "Project breakdown to smaller tasks" from mygoalsachieved.com/spreadsheets.

BEING A ONE-MAN BAND

As a freelancer, your role extends beyond your primary professional activity. You're not just a developer, writer, designer, or consultant. In reality, you're wearing multiple hats and juggling various responsibilities concurrently. From managing finances and marketing your services to handling customer relations and project management, you essentially run an entire business single-handedly!

As part of your role, you're handling a plethora of administrative responsibilities, such as:

1. Managing accounting tasks and completing tax-related paperwork;
2. Overseeing financial matters;
3. Drafting and executing contracts;
4. Undertaking customer relations duties;
5. Procuring necessary materials and tools;
6. Promoting your services through self-advertisement; and
7. Performing project management tasks.

It's like being the CEO, the manager, the accountant, the marketer, and the service provider all at once.

And as you navigate through this journey, balancing your core work with these additional tasks, you're not just a freelancer anymore. You've transitioned into something more—a solopreneur.

Overcoming the Challenge

Naturally, the optimal strategy is to minimize your involvement in the tasks that you either don't have the skills to do, or that don't appeal. This allows you to focus on what you do best—your primary work.

Consider delegating certain tasks by outsourcing them. Some other tasks can be automated, saving you valuable time. For a few tasks, invest time to learn and master them for efficient execution. Don't hesitate to seek assistance for the remainder of the functions. This way, you can ensure a smooth workflow while concentrating on your core responsibilities.

What follows is a description of practical strategies you can use for dealing with each of the examples given in the list above.

Managing accounting tasks and completing tax-related paperwork

You can hand these tasks over to a professional accounting firm or an acquaintance skilled in accounting. While this does incur additional costs, consider the time you'll save. If you spend even two hours a month on accounting, that's two hours you could have spent on your primary work. By outsourcing, you're effectively freeing up more time to focus on your core job, potentially boosting your productivity and income.

If you're fortunate to have an accountant friend, make a note to discuss these matters with them. If not, consider researching local accounting firms or those offering online services. Don't rush into a partnership with the first one you find. Having an honest and

competent accountant is critical, so thorough research is essential before making your selection.

Oversee financial matters

When it comes to managing financial matters, you should handle the details personally, perhaps with some guidance from your accountant. They can offer you legal strategies to reduce your tax liabilities. However, it's crucial you keep track of your Profit and Loss (P&L) statements, preferably forecasting them for at least three to six months ahead. Detailed instructions for creating a simple cash flow can be found later in this book under "Lack of financial stability."

Drafting and executing contracts

Your approach should depend on the particular project's scale and value.

For more significant projects worth thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars, it's wise to enlist a lawyer to compose these contracts for you.

For more modest projects, a cost-effective strategy could be to have a lawyer draft a generic contract tailored to your business. With each new project, you can simply replicate this contract and modify the client details and project-specific information accordingly.

For very minor projects, there are readily available online templates for basic contracts that you can utilize. You can Google something like "Simple Service Agreement for Article Writing," for example.

You should maintain a record of all your contracts using a straightforward tool like Google Sheets or Excel. This is necessary because each contract should bear a unique identification number. Think about digitizing your contracts and storing them online. You could then create a central hub, such as a Google Sheet, where you

include hyperlinks to each contract. This will serve as your go-to repository for tracking all your contracts.

This method will facilitate easy and quick access to your contracts whenever required.

You can download the template entitled “My contracts” at mygoalsachieved.com/spreadsheets.

Undertaking customer relations duties

In this book you'll notice that when referring to each “department” in your solopreneurship, I keep asserting that “this one could be the most crucial.” In many ways, this is accurate. Your solo venture is a rewarding yet intricate system that thrives only when all its elements are properly cared for.

However, taking good care of your customer relations “department” is one of the most important things you must do.

Consider the following scenario: You visit a restaurant, and a charming waiter quickly attends to you. He guides you through the menu, offers detailed descriptions of dishes you show interest in, and even makes a few recommendations. When your steak arrives, it's unfortunately overcooked, contrary to your medium-rare request. After expressing your concern, the waiter immediately apologizes and arranges for a new steak. In the meantime, he offers you a free beer. The replacement steak is perfect, and the waiter checks in to ensure everything is to your liking. Despite the initial hiccup, you leave the restaurant with a positive impression.

Now, envision the same scenario but with a less-than-friendly waiter. You're left waiting before finally being attended to. When asked for recommendations, the waiter simply refers you to the menu. Your steak arrives overcooked, and when brought to the waiter's attention, he grudgingly replaces it without apology or compensation. Despite

receiving the correct steak in the end, your overall experience leaves you vowing never to return.

In both cases, the end product—your steak—was the same. So why the starkly different reactions? The distinction lies in the customer experience. The first waiter excelled in managing his customer relations "department," while the second fell short.

This underscores why customer service is paramount. Of course, delivering a great product is essential, but in today's competitive market, it's a given. Providing excellent customer service—being the "good waiter"—will retain your existing customers and attract new ones to your business.

Procuring necessary materials and tools

Your line of work determines the tools and materials you require. Acquiring these can be time-consuming and even lead to procrastination if you venture out to purchase them during your work hours. Such an activity could disrupt your daily routine, eating into your productive hours.

Fortunately, there are several strategies you can employ to circumvent this issue.

If possible, enlist the help of a family member to obtain the necessary items so you don't have to do it yourself. Make use of online shopping as much as possible. You can quickly browse and order what you need during your lunch break and have the items delivered right to your doorstep, requiring only a few minutes of your time for acceptance. If visiting a local store is unavoidable, complete your work for the day beforehand to safeguard your productivity. Then, you can proceed to shop.

Computers and software fall into their own particular category. This poses a significant challenge for many freelancers, particularly those

not proficient in assembling computers and installing the requisite software. However, avoid the temptation to do it yourself. Instead, visit the nearest specialist and communicate your needs. Allow them to construct your hardware and install all necessary software. This approach will save you considerable time, energy, and money.

Promoting your services through self-advertisement

Even if you're the world's best freelancer, you won't secure any projects without visibility to potential clients.

One effective strategy is to maintain a strong presence on social media platforms. This increases your visibility and lets you connect with potential clients on a personal level. These platforms can serve as a gateway to showcase your skills and expertise, enabling potential customers to understand the value you bring.

Additionally, having a professional website can set you apart from the competition. It adds credibility to your business and offers a platform where you can exhibit your portfolio, share insights through blogs or podcasts, and provide an easy way for potential clients to contact you.

Moreover, freelancing platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, Freelancer, Toptal, Jooble, and Guru offer excellent opportunities to connect with potential clients. Your profile on these sites acts as your representative, so invest time and effort into building an impressive one. Highlight your skills, showcase your previous work, and gather positive reviews from past clients. Remember, a well-crafted profile can be the difference between landing a project or being passed over.

By implementing these strategies, you can effectively advertise yourself as a freelancer and attract more clients to your business. It's all about making yourself known and showing potential clients why you're the best choice for their projects.

Performing project management tasks

Project management can make or break your freelance career. In my early years as a freelancer, I worked around the clock as I believed only billable hours mattered. This mindset led to an unfortunate outcome—I was perpetually behind schedule, dealing with unsatisfied clients, constantly apologizing, and desperately trying to squeeze more workable hours into each day.

However, I soon realized the importance of investing time in non-billable tasks as well. Effective project management is essential for success in freelancing.

When you acquire a new project, take time to dissect it into smaller, manageable tasks. Estimate how much time each task will require. Then, create a schedule incorporating these tasks along with self-imposed deadlines. Though these minutes spent on project management might not be directly billable, they are, in fact, some of the most valuable investments you can make in your freelance career. Please review the example presented in the chapter "Difficulties estimating the time needed for a task."

This kind of organization allows you to have a clear understanding of your daily responsibilities. It helps maintain client satisfaction by ensuring timely delivery of quality work, and perhaps most importantly, it provides you with some breathing space. You'll find you're no longer scrambling to find more hours in the day; instead, you're able to balance your work and personal life effectively.

In essence, good project management enhances your productivity and contributes to a more satisfying and sustainable freelance career.

Continue Reading the Full Book

If the ideas in this sampler resonate with you, you can get the complete versions here:

[How to Overcome Freelancing Challenges - Amazon.com](#)