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ONCOURSE

2013

SUPPORTING YOUR CAREER PROGRESS



THE FEDERATION OF ENTERTAINMENT UNIONS

Editor

Frances Dredge

Design

Surgery Creations
www.surgerycreations.com

Contributors

Muriel McClymont
Brendan Foley
David Thomas
Sue Walker
Kate Willoughby
David Woods

Cover illustration

www.misterned.co.uk

Print and distribution

Rainbow Print

Photography

istockphoto.com
alamy.com

Federation of Entertainment Unions

Equity
The National Union of Journalists
The Musicians' Union
The Writers' Guild of Great Britain
e: info@feu.org
w: www.feutraining.org

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SOUND
ADVICE



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“FEU Training helps creative freelancers maximise their career potential”

Tips and techniques

14-29

Welcome to **ON COURSE**. Here you'll find information on the host of exciting learning activities that **FEU Training** is developing to help creative freelancers survive and thrive in the entertainment industries.

In such a competitive environment exacerbated by tough economics conditions, it's important to do everything we can to create satisfying work opportunities in the field that we love. This is where developing and using some key business skills along with a positive and tenacious attitude will help.

Throughout this issue, we'll be helping you do just that by taking a look at what business areas are most useful to support your creative career and how to overcome the issues that freelancers face in making a living.

We'll also signpost you to our digital learning centre where you'll find a variety of more in-depth information and learning facilities.

As you'll know, this creative life is rarely the glitz and glamour that some perceive it to be. Yes, the journey is often a blast and when the end result is what you've envisaged, it's amazing. However, the audience, whether giving you a standing ovation or debating the article you've written over their Sunday breakfast is unlikely to understand the sheer slog it often takes to deliver an idea from concept to pristine production form.

Given the frequent challenges, it's inspiring to see that so many creative people have the determination, drive and adaptability to consistently find ways of outing their talent and expanding the horizons of both themselves and their audiences.

FEU Training (a skills development project set up by Equity, the Musicians' Union, the National Union of Journalists and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain under the banner of the Federation of Entertainment Unions) is just one of the many ways that the partner unions are helping members to achieve the bright futures that they so deserve.

Frances Dredge
Editor/FEU Training project manager





Expanding

To help you establish a brighter creative future, **FEU Training** provides a range of business skills development opportunities

To help you maximise your creative potential, **FEU Training** offers a wide spectrum of business skills learning opportunities developed to meet the specific needs of creative freelances.

Whether you want to learn with other like-minded

people or prefer to get your information via the web, our aim is to provide *affordable, accessible* and *relevant* learning activities that fit in with your busy lives and often, irregular working hours. Constantly under development, the programme includes:

Getting together

Covering the key business areas from marketing to finance that help freelances create and maintain work continuity, a range of classroom-based training and events are taking place up and down the country from Newcastle to London through to Colchester and Bristol.

Online ease

You can instantly access a host of online learning and information facilities at www.feustraining.org including:

- **e-courses**, e.g., *Finance for Freelances*, *Marketing your Work* and *Building a Web Presence*
- **tutorials**: step-by-step guides to building a website
- **learning modules**: easily digestible quick tips on an array of subjects from developing a portfolio to dealing with rejection

FACT FILE

- Over 2,000 freelances have attended a range of **FEU Training** courses and events in the last three years.
- Over 5,000 members have received information and advice on skills development issues.

- Over 3,000 members have accessed the digital learning centre at www.feustraining.org
- The **FEU Training** website has over 4,000 members who are able to access a range of online learning activities, information and advice.

SKILL UP

Free to members of Equity, the NUJ, MU and the Writers' Guild, register at www.feustraining.org to access our range of learning opportunities and information.

your horizon

- **Forums and Q & As:** your chance to comment; ask questions; get advice and link up with peers
- **Blogs:** advice and information on key freelance issues.

Rising to the challenge

We'll also be holding a number of networking events themed around the challenges of freelance work including remaining confident, keeping motivated and keeping informed of what's happening in your industry.

Your input

All learning provision is designed with freelancers in mind.

If you would like to learn more about a particular business area or you would like us to run a workshop/course in your area, please email us at info@feustraining.org and we'll see what we can do.



**AWARD
WINNER**

*FEU Training is the
winner of the unionlearn
award for
Best Information,
Advice
and Guidance*



Who's a partner in FEU Training?

Equity, the **Musicians' Union (MU)**, the **National Union of Journalists (NUJ)** and the **Writers' Guild of Great Britain** have teamed up under the banner of the **Federation of Entertainment Unions** to help freelance members improve the key business skills that help generate and sustain creative work.



Snapshot

Freelances from across the creative industries tell us about their career progress and the challenges they face



THE ACTOR

Adam Dougal, Equity

"I trained in musical theatre and initially worked in educational theatre in East London. I've performed in panto in the north of England and London and I have toured with a group in the UK and around the world on cruises. Now I'm returning to Belfast to do a musical.

Carving out a route for yourself and not falling into old habits of comparing yourself with other people who you have graduated with is important. We all take our own journey. That's what the FEU *Diversifying Your Portfolio* workshop reminded me of. Everyone is very different and it's about making the most of your unique skills.

Healthy comparison is okay.

Looking at some actors whose journeys started out similarly to mine is useful. It's realising that success just doesn't happen for people overnight.

I've done bread and

butter jobs to allow me to invest in my creative endeavours and to the pay the bills.

The FEU workshop was useful as it made me realise that I was in business too. We work in an artistic world and think very creatively but we also need to think about money.

In my opinion there is enough work out there but the challenge is being proactive about finding it. It's a matter of knowing what your skills are and applying them.

It's also about making the most of each opportunity. For example, doing a production back home in Belfast will open up other opportunities with theatre companies there."



To find out how to better manage your money, try our e-course **Finance for Freelances** (free to members) at www.feustraining.org



THE MUSICIAN

Rasha Shaheen, MU

"I'm a musician who is particularly interested in working and performing experimental music. To help pay for my passion, I do quite a few jobs including teaching music at university level in Bristol.

My studies put me in a strong position to teach and I got into this because I wanted to work creatively on experimental music projects and didn't want money to inhibit my creative decisions.

Also, I deliver music workshops for community projects as well as being a music supervisor for a festival.

Other support jobs that I've done to make a living include market research and tour management.

I'm fascinated by the ways there are to make money out of music. Part of the reason I came to the FEU

workshop was to explore the business side of things because I'd like to set up a business. I think I'm in a good position to do



this because of my experience in studying and teaching in the music business.

I know it's competitive but my aim is to be a music supervisor and write for films. I'm aiming to act as a link between film production houses and musicians.

I'm very creatively driven and have always been able to keep going as a freelance even in tough times. I think this is because I grew up in Saudia Arabia where I was denied a voice and women were not allowed to make decisions. I need a place to be creative and that's why I keep going.

I'm optimistic about the future. I've been learning from both successful people and those who didn't reach their potential. Perseverance is key. It can be hard, especially in the first couple of years, but you need to keep building for the future."

Learn more about the skills needed to run your own business in our e-course **Business Skills for Freelances** at www.feustraining.org

"Perseverance is the way forward...and learning from successful people"



Snapshot >>>



THE JOURNALIST

Martin Jackson, NUJ

"I have a lot of varied experience under my belt including 10 years feature writing for the national broadsheets. I've had to diversify to maximise my opportunities. One of the benefits of relocating to Cornwall is that I was commissioned to write a book about the Eden Project [a charity and social enterprise] when it first opened.

I'm now aiming to exploit this opportunity further with an updated e-book. I've also developed corporate and public sector clients and taught journalism to university students.

I'm currently in the process of reinventing myself (yet again) including writing for high quality websites as well as getting back to what I do best – writing evocative copy as a national standard features writer. I want to do more of this for corporate bodies too.

My creative drive makes me go back to what I'm good at. It keeps me motivated and I always look to differentiate myself from my competitors. The industry is vibrant and competitive but what I have that newer entrants don't is experience.

Identifying viable work streams can be challenging because it's quite a confused marketplace currently. In the public sector

everything has to be tendered for which can be time consuming – sometimes taking up to two or three weeks. It can be hard to have to repeatedly sell yourself but it has to be done.

Inevitably, pitching sometimes leads to rejection. Rather than take this personally, it's important to learn from it. Don't be put off – just keep going.

Training is important. I've participated in a number of very useful FEU courses including *Social Media* and *LinkedIn*. Assuming that everything goes to plan, in the next two years I will be working with a select group of interesting clients who are willing to give me the chance to tell their stories as creatively as I can."



MORE INFO

For tips on dealing with rejection and many other challenges see our easily digestible **Quick tips** and ask questions by joining our **forum** at www.feutraining.org



THE WRITER

Linda Cotterill, Writers' Guild

"I am a writer and storyteller who specialises in working with children. I originally trained in theatre in France and since then I've written for theatre, screen (TV and film) and radio.

As a freelance in my fields, I think you have to do more than just self-promote. You have to truly want to do something that's useful. What's interesting is that the more things you do, the more skills you add to your existing portfolio.

I've had a varied and versatile freelance career, which has secured me a niche place in the market. While niche is good, it can be challenging when opportunities dry up. For example, funding changes all the time so you need to be astute when it comes to looking for other sources of funding and getting new work.

Luckily, I have been pretty successful in 'chasing the money'. For example, for years I've diversified into areas such as training and running workshops for all sorts of audiences – in the workplace and in the

community. My background in theatre and performing has helped me to do this.

I have entered a number of high-profile writing competitions and had success at the BAFTAs and screenings at Cannes.

I think it's important to develop your skills including participating in on-going training. As well as attending some FEU courses, I did a flash fiction course recently, which was a useful way to learn to write concisely and with impact.

My latest writing project has developed from my niche work with children. It's a non-fiction book that focuses on storytelling for families. There is so much out there in terms of writing so it's important to look for what you could do that's different and, at the same time, marketable."

MORE INFO

For help with building new work streams, try our e-course ***Diversifying your Portfolio*** at www.feustraining.org

"What's interesting is that the more things you do, the more skills you add to your existing portfolio"



Learning and using a range of business skills will help you get your talent under the spotlight

To be a successful freelance in the long term the challenge is not just to complete your core work to high standards but also to get work in the first place, manage the working process effectively and establish work continuity.

While no-one is suggesting that you become a business person, becoming more business-savvy will help create work opportunities in the creative field that you want and love to work in. Consider the following business areas:

What you offer

- Does the quality of your work meet expectations?
- Do you adapt, develop and improve what you do to meet changing demand?
- Do you specialise in a particular area?
- Do you have a portfolio that allows you to meet the

- needs of a range of clients?
- Do you have 'fall back' skills that allow you to support your core career when necessary?

Activity to gain work

- Do you regularly create new work opportunities?
- Do you understand what sales and marketing activities you could use?
- Do you know who your potential clients are?
- Do you have an identifiable image that people remember?
- Are you an active networker?



What **business**
skills do I need?



Getting repeat commissions

- Do you know if your clients are satisfied with your work?
- Do you understand the different expectations of each of your clients?
- Do you get work from past and current clients?
- Do you provide ideas and solutions to clients?

Money management

- Do you know how much money you need and want to earn every year and how much tax you have to pay?
- Is your cash flow management efficient and effective?
- Do you look actively for ways to make and/or save money?

Career progress

- Do you assess your performance and progress on a regular basis?
- Do you invest resources into developing your skills to meet changing demand?
- Do you have a short- and long-term career plan?
- Are you motivated and self-confident in your work?



What business skills do I need?

Continued

Efficiency and work tools

- Do you have a work plan so that you can balance your core work with support work?
- Do you manage your time effectively?
- Do you invest in resources such as equipment and skills development to ensure that you deliver the best possible results?
- Do you keep up with IT developments with an eye to



Try our e-courses including **Business Skills for Freelancers** and **Building your Web Presence** at www.feutraining.org

seeing what you could use to support your work?

In perspective

If this looks like a lot of ground to cover, don't panic. Organisations have numerous departments to carry out the activities above. However, they are important

to the growth of any business – small or large.

For an individual, it's a matter of pinpointing the main activities that will help you now and in the future and then taking a step-by-step approach to implementing these in your working life.

ALL IN THE TIMING

Juggling core creative work and business support activities requires discipline and focus. To make the most of your time:

✓ Plan ahead

Make a 'to do' list each morning (or evening for the day after) of what you need to accomplish. For longer term forward planning, also make a list for the coming week, month, quarter and year.

✓ Prioritise tasks

To ensure that your list is workable, differentiate between 'must do today', 'must do later' and 'don't do' (if you get into the habit of this, you will find things that you can drop).

✓ Estimate task times beforehand

This will help you set realistic targets as

well as that ensure that specific jobs don't take too much time.

✓ Review your habits

Is the format of your day efficient? For example, if you're most creative first thing in the morning, avoid routine chores like answering emails or general administration.

✓ Set parameters

To help stop the dividing line between work and free time getting blurred, set guidelines and ask your family and friends to respect these, e.g., if you work from home, go into your office space at a set time every morning and stick to your work routine without popping out every three seconds to see what's happening. Similarly, ask others to observe these parameters and not interrupt you.



Union learning

The FEU partners



THE FEDERATION of
ENTERTAINMENT UNIONS

Equity, the Musicians' Union, The National Union of Journalists and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (with funding from **unionlearn**) are working together under the banner of the **Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU)** to support the career progress of creative freelancers through the provision of *affordable, accessible and relevant* business skills learning opportunities.



The **NUJ** works across the entire span of the media industry including broadcast, print and new media.

It campaigns to improve pay and conditions; protect and promote freedom and professional and ethical standards in all media.



The **MU** represents all sectors of the music business regardless of genre. The union promotes

the rights and interests of its members and negotiates on behalf of musicians with major industry employers.



Representing professional performers and creative practitioners throughout the

UK, **Equity** is a campaigning union with a strong track record in taking the things that matter to members to employers, parliament and other centres of influence. Members are at the heart of union activity and by getting involved they drive the union forward.



The **Writers' Guild** represents writers across the media including books, film, online, radio, theatre, TV and videogames. It campaigns

and negotiates for writers to secure the best pay and working conditions and provides members with a range of services such as basic contract vetting and advice. Membership is open to writers of all levels of experience.



Supporting a wide variety of union adult learning projects, **unionlearn** is the learning and skills development branch of the Trade Union Congress (TUC).

Funding from unionlearn continues to support us in providing training that meets freelance member learning needs.





Don't like the idea of 'sales'? **Frances Dredge** explains why you might need to change your mindset

Conscience does make cowards of us all...

SOUND ADVICE

FEU Training delivers a variety of learning opportunities to help support freelance career development. In **Sound Advice** tutors and other industry professionals share their tips and advice on key business skills

If you view the words *sales* and *selling* with deep suspicion and even revulsion much as Shakespeare's Hamlet viewed his stepfather the king and/or you would rather 'get thee to nunnery' than directly approach someone to ask them for work, it's probably time to re-think your perceptions and consider how using a few basic sales techniques could help your creative career flourish rather than die an untimely death. Consider the following:

Get into the right frame of mind

Selling isn't about going to someone 'cap in hand', it's about instigating a mutually

beneficial arrangement. However, and here's the rub for some, to get your work under the right people's noses and convince them that you're the best person for the job, the onus is on you to take a pro-active and often direct approach.

This takes confidence and courage but it doesn't mean that you have to become a brash and arrogant Claudius. However, in such a competitive environment, procrastination, indecision and passivity won't get you far either.

So, to increase your options and get more work, remind yourself that you have something valuable to offer and make up your mind to tell people about it.



MORE
INFO

For a more in-depth explanation of the sales process, go to our e-course **Business Skills for Freelancers**: www.feustraining.org

Identify your hot leads

Direct sales can be a time consuming and drawn out process so it's important to focus your efforts on those people who are most likely to be hiring in your field – 'hot leads' (you can reach a more general audience by marketing methods such as social media).

You'll know some of these off the top of your head (and may have been avoiding making that call!) but, you'll also need to stay abreast of industry developments to keep track of who's hiring for what and when.

Start and regularly update a 'contacts list' so that you can keep track of your clients and potential clients. A 'cold lead' now may change into a rich seam of work in future so you won't want to let it drop off your radar.

Set realistic targets

When busy with core creative work, it can be difficult to find time to complete support work – especially if you find it far less interesting. So, set

yourself bite-sized achievable targets, e.g., you commit to phoning one potential client per week.

Make contact

The method you use will depend on what you want to achieve, e.g., you may need to make several phone calls and write a few emails to set up a meeting.

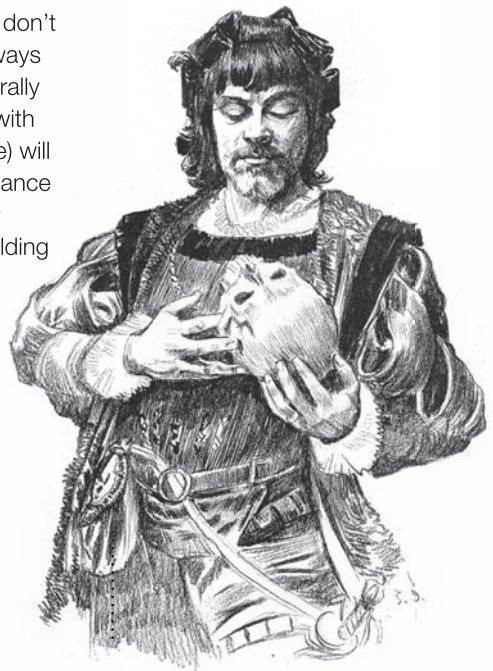
Nowadays, email is a popular and useful form of communication but don't rely on it. It's not always necessary but generally speaking, meeting with clients (at least once) will give you a better chance of creating two-way communication, building rapport, gaining understanding and making a positive impact.

"Alas poor Yorick!
I **didn't** know him
Horatio. Some say he
was a master player
but he hid his light
under yonder bushel."

Prepare and practise your pitch

Whether it's written, via phone or face-to-face, be clear on what your objectives are and what you are going to say/demonstrate to achieve these. To ensure that your pitch hits the mark with each client:

- **Tailor your key messages** to meet that client's needs and demonstrate that you have the skills to match those needs. If you don't know what the client wants from you, do some research



Conscience does make cowards of us all...

Continued

which might include asking the client some clarifying questions.

- **Highlight the benefits.**

People are not interested in your work per se but how your work can benefit them.

- **Gain agreement.** As you talk through each of the benefits that your work delivers, check to see if what you are saying is of interest, e.g., "Is that the sort of thing you're looking for?" If yes, you'll start to build up positive momentum. If no, it's best to know immediately so you can clarify and re-target your pitch.

- **Ask for the work** (close the sale). Even if the client seems enthusiastic about your work, don't assume that they will make a decision without prompting. Don't be shy of asking for the work, e.g., "You seem happy with what we've discussed so far, shall we go ahead?"

"Selling is about instigating and confirming a mutually beneficial arrangement"

SALES PROCESS

Remember, getting new work is usually a step-by-step process over a period of time containing several mini pitches and using various forms of communication.

For example:

Pitch 1

Action: introduce myself to the potential client at networking event.

Objectives: put a face to a name, obtain contact details and agree on further contact.

Pitch 2

Action: phone client.

Objectives: build rapport, introduce an idea and gain enough interest so that the client agrees to meet.

Pitch 3

Action: meet the client to present the idea.

Objectives: explain, demonstrate and convince the client to take up the idea; if possible, confirm

the commission (close the sale); if not, find out more about the client to see what else they need in order to commit; deal with any reservations the client might have; agree next step.

Pitch 4

Action: email client with more details and clarification of cost as requested at the meeting.

Objectives: further explain and demonstrate to the client why they should take up the idea; provide cost outline so that the client is convinced of the value for money.

Pitch 5

Action: phone client.

Objectives: ensure that the client is happy with the details of the email; find out if there are any further questions/reservations; close the sale.



Assume clients are happy with your work and you may only find out the opposite is true when they don't hire you again

Happy customers?

It's often a challenging and timely process obtaining a new commission. So, once you're in, the next step is to ensure that your client is satisfied, preferably delighted with your work. If they are, it's much more likely that they'll hire you again or recommend you to other potential work sources.

Ensuring customer satisfaction will rely on what you deliver (the quality of your work) and how you deliver it, e.g., your work may be brilliant but if it's late, it's of no use.

In addition, each client may have a different definition of satisfaction, e.g., they know your work is good but they can't stand working with you because they think you're surly, verging on rude.

It's up to you to find

out what your customers value most through asking questions, listening, observing and checking to see if they are happy with your work. In addition to individual expectations, there are several basics that clients will expect:

Professionalism: you are well mannered and observe their professional code of behaviour.

Quality: your work meets, better still, exceeds expectations.

Efficiency: you are reliable and meet deadlines for work and invoicing consistently.

Honesty: you provide the correct information of what you can do and don't make promises you can't keep.

Clear communication: you keep clients up to date and let them know if any unforeseen problems occur.

Empathy: clients feel that you understand their requirements.

Value: clients feel that they are getting value for money. This doesn't mean that you are cheap to hire (this can make you seem less valuable) but that whatever fee you charge is worth the cost.





Life coach **Muriel McClymont** says confidence is within our control

There are lots of interpretations of what confidence actually is. In fact many people often equate confidence with arrogance and therefore struggle to even want to achieve it.

True confidence is about being comfortable in our own skin and accepting ourselves. This doesn't mean that we don't try hard to make positive changes to improve and move forward but that we are realistic and honest about our abilities and recognise when we

you admire who is confident in any given situation: stand like they stand, breathe like they breathe and once you have a sense of how they would feel in this environment, borrow their confidence and walk in and deal with what comes up as they might. The funny thing is that after you spend some time pretending, you will actually start to genuinely feel more confident.

Positive visualisation

Lack of confidence can emerge when

replacing those imagined and destructive images with positive ones. Think about the times that you have felt confident – how it felt, what it looked like and what you heard. You'll find that creating this positive image will help you feel more upbeat and confident.

Learn and move on

See everything as a learning opportunity. Whether something goes well or badly, you will learn from it. No failure, only feedback.

Confidence in mind

need to learn more – even if that means admitting we don't know something. Confidence is largely a state of mind and is very much within our control. Try the following to boost your confidence levels:

Pretend!

If you don't feel confident, pretend! Think of someone

we set our imagination to picturing all the things that could go wrong. Many of us are very good at terrifying ourselves like this and consequently scuppering ourselves even before we begin. So practise



“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe we are gifted at something and this thing must be attained.”

Marie Curie

This is an incredibly powerful mind-set to take into a new situation.

Preparation

Try to prepare thoroughly for whatever you are walking into. Find out about who is going to be there and plan what you want to say and what you want to achieve.

If you have done your homework, you will be better equipped to contribute effectively to conversations and make a better impression.

Always have a plan B

If you think this opportunity is your only one or last chance, the stakes can be too high for you to relax and perform at your best. If you know that you have other options then it takes the pressure off. It's a chance, not the chance!

Celebrate your achievements...

...and keep a record of them. Go through them all when you are preparing,

and remind yourself what a talented, resourceful and wonderful person you are. This will help you to stand tall and recognise that you have a lot to offer which transforms the power dynamic of the situation.

Focus on how far you have come

Learn from others and use their success as a positive role model but don't compare yourself with them.

Compare yourself with where you were six months ago and six months before that. Review and celebrate all you have learned and the experience you have accumulated.

Stay optimistic

One of the most common factors in confident people is that they hold a belief that eventually, somehow, they will succeed.

So tune into the attitude that if it's not this time, something else will work for you in the future.

**GET
ADVICE**

You can ask questions and chat to other freelancers by joining our **Freelance Challenge Forum** at www.feustraining.org





Branding is a marketing term that includes elements that go towards how you present yourself professionally – your image.

As a freelance, in many ways you are your brand: the quality of your work, your personality and the way you get on with your clients all leave an impression. Assuming this is a good one, this will help you establish long and fruitful working relationships.

While successful brand development is a specialist skill that global organisations invest huge amounts of money in (think Coke and Nike) demonstrating how important creating the right image is in today's multi-media world, it doesn't have to break the bank. Whether you're investing in a designer to help create your brand or need to go it alone, observing the following brand building basics will help:

Image perception

Ask yourself how you want to be perceived? What perception is going to get you the most work now and in the long term? What are the defining qualities of your work and your attitude that make you stand out from the competition? The world of business refers to this as your USP (your unique selling point/proposition, i.e., that which distinguishes you/your business from others). For example, your brand values

Brand or bland?

Creative Director **David Woods** shares insight into building a memorable brand



might focus on being fast, efficient and innovative.

However, your brand should be authentic. You'll need to deliver what you promise so if you miss deadlines and haven't come up with a new idea for a decade, you're on the wrong brand track (and possibly in the wrong industry!).

Be honest with yourself – your brand should play to your strengths so decide what these are.

Get ideas

Have a look at some of your favourite brands (individuals or companies) to see what makes them successful. For example, celebrity chef Jamie Oliver hit the right to note with the public who identified with his 'down-to-earth, friendly, Essex-boy' style and actor Johnny Depp is 'cool' personified.

Convey your brand

Once you've decided what you want to convey, it's time to create your brand.

Your branding tool kit might consist of:

You: The way you present yourself in professional situations will have a major impact on your (brand)

SKILL UP

For more help on promoting your work, go to our *Marketing for Freelances* e-course at feutrain.org

image. This might include your communication skills and the visual way you present yourself through what you wear.

Your name: If you're choosing a company name, think about what it conveys to your clients. Also, try to

keep it short so that people can remember it.

Your logo – the mark of your brand identity, which might be wordform (e.g., your name or a company name) pictorial/symbolic (a picture or symbol that represents what you do) or letterform (a group of letters – perhaps your initials).

Straplines – which convey key brand values and are often included on all marketing media along with your logo. For example, some famous straplines you should recognise if the marketing millions spent on creating them was money well spent include: "Beanz, Meanz, Heinz" (Heinz Beans) and 'Vorsprung durch Technik' (Audi).

You don't have to have a big budget to come up with a suitable strapline and it doesn't need to be too catchy or clever. It needs to be short, snappy and convey a positive impression of what you deliver. For example: 'Creative copywriting, on time, every time.'





LIVING CREATIVELY

Writer-director **Brendan Foley** says that the road may sometimes be bumpy but you *can* make a living from what you love



It can be challenging for creative freelancers to consistently make ends meet. But, there are ways that will help you to boost your earnings:

1. Develop more than one string to your bow

This is the single most important ingredient in a successful self-employed person in the entertainment business. Your career should be like a cooker with at least four hotplates burning away at any one time.

The easiest way to come a cropper in this business is just to have one product/service to sell. For a freelance journalist it may be that you need four utterly different areas of expertise – you may be able to write

about musical theatre, engineering, trends in dental hygiene and snorkelling.

Or if you are a musician, playing a certain sort of engagement, be it pub gigs or the Albert Hall, you may find that a totally different revenue stream forms a useful second-fiddle. And a third. And a fourth.

If one of your income streams takes a lot of time but brings in very little, put it on the back burner and identify a new one that brings in more for less effort. You don't have to abandon what you love, but you do have to pay the bills.

The good news is that sometimes having three or four different revenue streams, always jostling for attention, can make life more

interesting, or even make us better at whatever we regard as our core skill.

2. Be your own publicist

Few of us can afford our own publicist. Those who can usually do employ one, not out of a sense of self-aggrandisement but because having some level of profile among the people who can pay us means more work in the future.

So when times are hard, the best possible approach is to "accentuate the positive". It is a strange facet of human nature that we flock to success. This has always been the case – the adage: "Success has a thousand





parents but failure is an orphan” rings true to those of us who have had a near miss or two along the way. But while bandying quotes, Shakespeare had a more useful one: “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so”. If you have had even the most modest success, e.g., a writer coming fifth in a small competition may not be front page news, but on a blog or a tweet or rolled in with a few other honourable mentions, it can set that writer apart from

the herd enough to get a read by a decent agent.

3. Spot economic trends

Hindsight, it is said, has 20/20 vision. But many freelances have survived past economic downturns by identifying skills that are growing in demand just as some of their other expertise seems to be waning.

If you can identify a future trend early on and become an expert in that field, you can effectively invent not just another ‘string to your bow’ but a string that may become a significant revenue generator and yet allow you enough time to still nurture whatever core skill you want to pursue.

Life is not always an either/or. Sometimes this requires understanding parts of the business that may seem very far from what we do. For instance, for a film actor, it is important to understand what, if any, of his or her future revenue may come

from DVD sales versus people downloading films online.

4. Polish up

Sometimes, to make the most of an opportunity, you will need to polish your own skills base. The difference between a freelance journalist waiting for the phone to ring and one able to ring a commissioning editor with a great idea to boost circulation may be as simple as going on a course to learn how to pitch your work. Or, learning how to build a website and use social media to get your name out there.

The ultimate thing that successful folk seem to do is make a plan and put in the work to make it real, rather than waiting for the cavalry.

Lastly, if it doesn’t sound too glib, it is important not to get bitter about how damn hard it can be. Enjoying the bumpy journey is probably a better bet than always squinting towards some far off destination.

www.filmfoley.com

**MORE
INFO**

To catch up with advice and opinion from a range of freelances, read the **FEU Training blog** at www.feustraining.org.





WARMING UP TO COLD CALL

Tutor **David Thomas** provides
tips on making new contacts



As part of the process of establishing new work, you're likely to have to 'cold' call or email someone who doesn't know who you are.

This concept brings its own fears for many people. It's right up there with entering a room full of strangers.

The fear usually stems from the assumption that you are going to ask someone for work and that they are going to reject you. Coupled with this is the assumption that you are just going to be a nuisance.

So, it's important to get rid of these assumptions before you start. Your aim won't be to ask for work on the first contact (unless the opportunity arises!)

but to introduce yourself, find out more about what the client needs and start building a mutually beneficial relationship. To help you do this more effectively and to help you feel more confident, some preparation is useful:

Do your research

Before you pick up the phone (or put finger to keyboard) find out as much

MORE
INFO

Find out more about **selling and marketing** your work at our **digital learning centre** www.feutrain.org. Also see davidthomasmedia.com

as you can about the kind of work this person does.

Things like:

- what sort of responsibilities they have
- what sort of projects they are in charge of
- how long they have been in this role
- what sort of budget they have for the kind of work you do
- what part of the year they spend their budget
- where they are based.

Some of this you could find out through a bit of judicious googling. If you're on LinkedIn, look at their profile.

Once you have a better understanding of them, you can plan what you are going to say/draft. This might include:

- how you heard about them – especially if recommended by a mutual friend
- how you normally help people like them with the work that you do

- how you'd like to meet up to find out more about them and show them the work that you do/explain the ideas that you have that could be of interest to them.

The key is to show that you are as interested in learning about them as they might be in meeting you so it's important to be ready to ask questions to find out more.

Plan your objectives

Before you make contact, think about what you'd like to achieve as a result and always have an idea of what the next step should be. For example:

- A brief introduction of my work and confirmation that the person will read my CV
- Gaining interest from the person and then emailing some further information and website link
- Gaining interest and arranging a follow up meeting.

Get organised

If you perceive something as too big a mountain to climb, it'll put you off even starting. So, make the task easier and more palatable by breaking it down into small steps and plan it in to your diary, e.g., you spend two hours, once a week making calls. Also, plan in something that you enjoy doing immediately afterwards to keep you motivated.

Be positive yet realistic

Not everyone that you contact will be interested in taking the next step. This can be disappointing but it's important that you're not put off from contacting others. Usually it's nothing personal – just a matter of circumstance or timing, e.g., the person may just not be hiring right now.

If you find out as much as you can, you will be able to judge whether it is worth contacting them again at a later date.

However, do learn from each experience. If you don't get what you want, ask yourself if there are ways in which you could change what you're saying/doing to make more of an impact.





Tech Talk



After shunning social media for years, actor-writer **Kate Willoughby** now sees it as an important way to open new career doors

As a freelance, I've found that social media and even email can really help to market my work. If you're not already regularly using it, here are a few tips to get you started:

Be disciplined

It's easy to get addicted to social media and waste lots of valuable time to boot. So, to help stay in touch but avoid disappearing down an online tunnel

that doesn't get you to wonderland, try using an online calendar such as Google's to block in the best times to check your Twitter and Facebook accounts, e.g. half an hour once or twice per day or whatever suits your schedule and objectives.

Twitter lists are a great way to make the most out of your time (set them up via the 'Me' tab at the top of the screen. Click on 'Lists' and then the 'Create list' button). You can create relevant lists to your work, such as theatres, agents and other freelancers in the same field as you. These can then become a short cut for you to catch up on what's happening in your line of

work. They can be 'Public' or 'Private' to you.

You may want to consider setting up separate personal and professional social media profiles. Setting up a business and social Facebook page is straightforward and you can have different accounts on Twitter too for different areas of your work. Currently, I only have one Twitter profile and I find this works well. There's only so much time in the day, so it's important to get the balance right otherwise your creative work could suffer.

Be discerning

When communicating through social media, it's the norm to share information



SKILL
UP

Want to **build a web presence**? Go to www.feustraining.org to sign in to our ecourse that will guide you through each step.

about your professional and personal life. However, if your aim is to engage a professional audience, e.g., those people who might want to hire you or you want to work with in the future, you need to bear in mind that things that your friends find hilarious, may lose you brownie points on a professional basis, e.g., clients might be impressed to see on Facebook that you're attending a film premier but if you're also seen sliding down the wall, swigging the dregs out of a bottle of fizz, you may lose your sparkle in their eyes.

Basically, if in doubt, don't publish. Also, always re-read tweets and Facebook comments before posting. While the immediacy of social media is an advantage, it has led people to post in haste and repent at leisure.

Easy options

Email is another simple marketing tool, especially if

you spend a few moments personalising it. Create a signature via the 'Settings' options of your email account and include details such as your website, links to your current project(s) and social media. When I'm in a show, I also include an e-flyer image in the signature, but no bigger than 100kb.

Websites and blogs are also a useful way of creating and increasing an online profile. I recently moved my website and blog to WordPress and have found it really easy to use. Make sure your website isn't too wordy, especially on the front (home) page. Clarity and simplicity make an ideal combination online. Have a look at other freelancers'

"Use social media discerningly: post in haste, repent at leisure"

websites for ideas.

If you're just starting out or want to improve your website, take a look at *FEU Training's* website for a practical and easy guide in setting up a WordPress site. When choosing a theme for a website make sure it has a customised theme for Smartphones.

Be consistent

Try to be consistent with your online profile across every platform, e.g., use the same profile shot for emails, websites and social media. It's worth considering what your three key selling points are as a freelance. If you have a portfolio career, make the effort to consider three points for each aspect of your freelance work.

After shunning social media for years, I finally took the plunge a couple of years ago and haven't looked back. It has opened a lot of doors career-wise.

Probably the best piece of advice I was given was to do some research. Have a look at what others in your field are doing to market themselves online and adapt their approach to suit you.





Writer-tutor
Sue Walker
gives advice
on combating
negative isolation

Silver screen siren Greta Garbo



“I want to
be alone”

(or do I?)

One of the major challenges encountered by many freelancers comes from the fact that we spend much of our time working alone.

This is often a necessary and productive part of the creative process, e.g., when I’m writing I need peace and

quiet to let my imagination run wild. However, if you don’t watch it, you can get too isolated which leads to negative emotional and psychological consequences that become a barrier to both work and play.

To ensure you maintain a healthy balance:

Know yourself

It’s important to spend some time thinking about what level of contact with the outside world would be advantageous for your work and social life. Make a list of what matters most to you.

Shake and mix

If you are gregarious and need to have contact every day (apart from the family or whoever you share your home with), you will need to think how best to do this.

You may be unable to meet up with friends so think of other things that can get you out. Even a trip down to the local library might be enough.

If you need less but regular contact, make a point of planning your week so that you can fit in meeting up with a friend or colleague. Talk

shop or not – it's the getting out and making contact that helps. While working hard is important, you're investing in your wellbeing and that will make you work more productively.

Try networking

Here, this means seeing people with business objectives in mind.

Remember that becoming too isolated can result in you dropping out of the loop on a whole range of information including who's hiring whom; available funding streams and available support so, even if you're not a natural mixer, some strategic mingling is advantageous.

Keep learning

As well as keeping up our knowledge, we need to be aware of what we need to

learn/train for. In addition to improving your skills and providing information on what direction to take, attending events such as training courses and lectures can provide you with the positive vibe of meeting like-minded people (we see this at our FEU Training events regularly – peers connect and feel better for it).

Find a work buddy

Some freelancers successfully set up hubs for co-working, where they share the same space and ideas. The creative group energy can be a buzz.

Volunteer

Many organisations are crying out for help and volunteering can be a highly rewarding way of getting out and meeting people. You

never know whom you'll get the chance to network with either or the ideas that you might come up with as a result.

Re-locate

If working from home is starting to be feel like being in prison, break out by:

- Working elsewhere for a while, e.g., at a local library.
- If you can afford the cost, settle yourself in a internet cafe for an hour or two
- Go to a friend's house (fresh surroundings can engender fresh creative thinking)
- If you can't get out, even working in another part of your home for a few hours and not just your 'office' helps.

Join an online network

People are increasingly using online methods of communication to stay in touch – which are convenient and easy, e.g., *FEU Training* runs an online forum where you can chat to tutors and fellow creatives. I like to get out and meet people too but everyone is different and it's really what works for each individual that counts.

GET ADVICE

Take a step to connect by joining our online **Freelance Challenge Forum**. Here, you'll get the chance to ask questions and talk to your creative peers. Or, come to our workshops and events where you can share your experiences with like-minded people and learn in a friendly environment.



CONTACT US

FEU Training

Frances Dredge

Project manager

t: 07914 397243

e: frances.d@feustraining.org

Kate Willoughby

Project team

t: 07975 913123

e: kate.w@feustraining.org

Muriel McClymont

Project team

t: 07710 240585

e: muriel.m@feustraining.org

Sue Walker

Project team

t: 07718 182522

e: sue.w@feustraining.com

Equity

Louise Grainger

Senior Organiser

t: 020 7670 0214

e: lgrainger@equity.org.uk

General enquiries:

t: 020 7379 6000

e: info@equity.org.uk

Musicians' Union

Bindu Paul

Live Performance and Teaching Officer

t: 020 7840 5506

e: bindu.paul@themu.org

General enquiries

t: 020 7582 5566

e: info@themu.org

National Union of Journalists

NUJ Freelance Office

t: 020 7843 3713

e: freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk

General enquiries

t: 020 7278 7916

e: info@nuj.org.uk

Writers' Guild of Great Britain

Bernie Corbett

General Secretary

t: 020 3372 8401

e: corbett@writersguild.org.uk

General enquiries:

t: 020 7833 0777

e: erik@writersguild.org.uk

www.feustraining.org

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