

>>Snapshot



Matt Helm

Musician

Musicians' Union

Can you tell us a bit about your career to date?

Two and a half years ago I left a career in financial services and set out to develop a career as a guitarist. In that time I have grown a thriving guitar teaching practice, have performed for amateur and professional musical theatre, as well as creating original material for the rock band I'm in.

What do you like most about your work?

What I love about my work is that I spend most of my time with a guitar in my hand, which is wonderful. It's just what I want to do. I enjoy the teaching because it's great being able to pass it on. The live performance is fantastic. To share in and give others a musical experience is just why we do it. It's a pretty good job all in all.

What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?

The biggest challenge is all the juggling I have to do, between seeing students, gigs, rehearsals and making money. It's sometimes difficult to balance everything to make sure you earn enough now, as well as doing enough in advance to secure future income. Then, of course, there's the admin, marketing, planning and practise.

Have you added new work/skills to your portfolio over time?

Yes, I added musical theatre to my portfolio. I enjoy it and it's a route to getting paid performance work. I also got

involved in composing music for NHS animations, which has led to some filming work. I think it's important to learn new styles to keep it fresh and help you grow as an artist.

What is the biggest challenge of learning the skills that you need?

Time and priorities are the biggest issues for me. Balancing what to do that will get you money now rather than later is essential. For the kind of things I want to learn, there are many free resources available on line, so it's not so much a problem of money for me.

What FEU Training courses have you attended?

I've attended several courses including Money Matters, Drive Traffic to your Website, Blogging and Creative Productivity.

All of them have been incredibly useful. Money Matters was brilliant and Creative Productivity also made a big difference to me. These two courses helped me get organised in a way I never have been before.

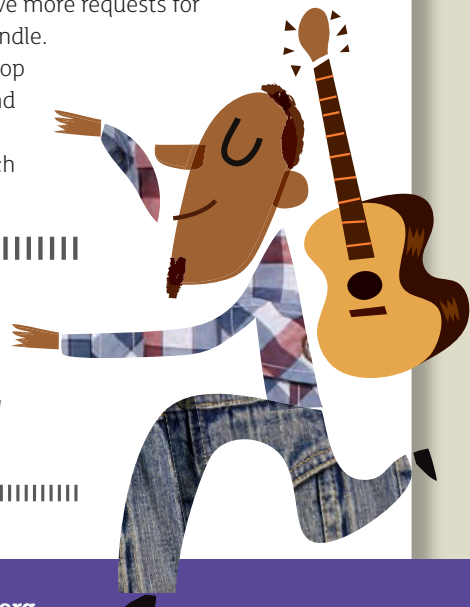
What are the most important things that you've learned and how has it helped your work?

Learning how to keep good records and use effective budgeting and forecasting has revolutionised my life! Introducing the planning and time scheduling strategies from Money Matters and Creative Productivity has made an amazing difference. For example, my admin time has been drastically reduced, so now I have loads more time for practising.

What I learnt on the Driving Traffic to your Website course has allowed me to increase the hits to my website so much that I now have more requests for teaching than I can handle.

The blogging workshop gave me great ideas and inspiration about the content I can use, which

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has also helped with my Google rankings, and therefore website traffic.
The How to Shoot and Edit Video course has given me so much confidence in my ability to shoot and edit a professional looking video, that I have just accepted some work that will involve me using this new skill. So, watch out, it could be a new item on my portfolio soon.

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What has encouraged you to attend FEU Training sessions?

These workshops are great for networking with other creative people. It's a wonderful environment to meet people and hear their stories, made even better by mixing in the different creative unions. It's a wonderful resource.

I've got something useful from every course, but even just attending has helped me grow my confidence in walking into groups and networking.

Everything I have attended has contributed to helping me streamline the admin side of the business by managing the money, my confidence, resilience and time management, all of which lets me focus more on the music.

These courses have been the No.1 benefit of my Union membership so far.

Do you know any other organisation that offers business skills courses for creatives?

No.