

>>Snapshot

Naomi Goldsmith

Independent Journalist

& Media Consultant

NUJ



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

After gaining a drama degree, I did a post graduate diploma in Radio Journalism at the London College of Printing. This provided great vocational training that enabled me to get local radio station work. In turn, this led to a staff job at BBC Radio Sheffield.

I then took a 12-month contract as a political reporter and presenter at BBC Midlands in Birmingham. From there I became a political parliamentary correspondent in the West Midlands, moving onto being the BBC World TV anchor for Asia today. This was broadcast at prime time in Asia, which was the middle of the night here, so it was a tough period of working nightshifts.

After this, I progressed into freelance presenting, reporting and producing, and, through that, expanded my portfolio to include training. For the last two decades, I have been training journalists abroad. I mainly work in conflict, post conflict and transitioning countries such as Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, South Sudan and Bosnia on international development projects.

What do you like most about your work?

I enjoy the challenge of working in environments where people are dealing with huge issues, in the sort of places where there is no real recognition of the role of journalists in democracy. I find it hugely rewarding to enable journalists to have more confidence and skills to do their job more effectively.

What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?

The biggest challenge is keeping up with the constantly changing aspects of the job. When I started you had a notebook and it all felt very linear. Now we work with multi-platform digital media that is developing and evolving continuously. As a media consultant, you have to understand how the technical changes are impacting the

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industry to stay current.

Changes aren't just technical either. There are always new and developing aspects of reporting such as 'fake news' where you have to find strategies to deal with reporting it.

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

I have added gender and unconscious bias to my portfolio. There are quite a few projects funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the EU on this. Scandinavians are also generous in providing funding in this area. I can't help thinking that countries would be better off if there was more gender equality. I'm sure there would be fewer wars.

Cyber security is another skill I have developed. You used to have to make sure you didn't lose your notebook but now, with problems like hacking, you have to find a secure way to transfer and record information especially if you are working on a sensitive story.



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

When it comes to learning about new technology, it is as much about having the confidence to do it as it is technical aptitude. The other challenge is to keep using what you have learned so it becomes properly established. A frustration of the training day is that you learn so much but then need to find the time to use it. If you don't, you generally lose it. This is especially true for technology. I try and apply it as much as I can straight afterwards.

What FEU Training courses have you attended?

- Write that book and get it published
- Motivation Matters
- Drive traffic to your website
- Using data to make more money from freelancing
- Effective communication
- Presentation skills
- Unleash the potential of your technology
- Get Hired!

What are the most important things that you've learned?

Learning new skills with FEU Training gives you an added confidence, which is important. Once you have more confidence, you are encouraged to go and acquire more skills and knowledge elsewhere, so it builds.

What I've learned has enabled me to stay productive in the workplace by helping me to extend my skills into project management. I particularly like that there are lots of practical exercises in the workshops. When you have done something once, even in a workshop environment, it makes it easier to do it again for real when the opportunity arises. That has been of real value to me.

In the Get Hired, interview day, I learned not to assume that my experience was obvious from my CV, and to keep going in an interview to share concrete examples of my achievements and how I have overcome difficulties. This recently helped me land a three-month training and management position via a telephone interview.

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What has encouraged you to attend FEU Training sessions?

The sessions are free because I'm a member of the NUI and geographically very accessible for me. They also offer a good range of topics. It's beneficial to work with other people from different creative backgrounds with such different perspectives.

The freelance life can be pretty isolated so it is great to be able to come along, meet up with others and learn something useful too! It is also useful to see how other trainers work - as a trainer myself I can learn from their methodologies.

It's re-assuring to know that there is an organisation like this, dedicated to your professional development. It keeps your spirits up. Thank you for the sterling work that you do.

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

None that I am aware of.

