

>> Snapshot

Rachel Sambrooks

Writer/Performer

Equity

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

I studied drama at Manchester University and managed to get acting work in profit share plays but there weren't many opportunities in the West Midlands at the time, so I taught English in Japan and Spain for a time. I worked for the BBC for a year and as a Sub-Editor at the PA Listings and then did a Masters in Playwriting in Birmingham.

After becoming a mother, I did a course in 'stand up comedy' and have been regularly gigging since 2010 as a comic and performance poet.

I've had plays in development with theatres, writing broadcast on BBC radio and short film credits. Last year I created a spoken word show called "Stand By Your Nan", which has been touring libraries and venues in 2018. I write speculative comedy scripts and short stories and won City of Stories for Merton 2018 with "Nonsuch Place as This". A radio play I wrote is to be broadcast in the USA soon and I am working on a novel.

I'm particularly interested in community arts performing and writing and have been involved in bringing art into libraries. Since 2014, I've hosted and run "Words Aloud" spoken word events at my local library which has open mic and feature artists.

I have just been taken on as a poetry tutor alongside a pottery tutor on an interesting project linking the two. Ideally, I would like to earn my living by writing but engaging with the skills I have is what is really important to me.

What do you like most about your work?

I love to use and work with the skills I've developed and I enjoy a challenge. To be able to write and perform to make a living is just so fulfilling. It is the Holy Grail for me. I feel it is such a privilege that I want to make sure I offer value, so I work out what an audience wants, but also needs and see how I can provide that.

|||||

"The video day has got me using films from events which I then post on Instagram. I was recently Poet in Residence for SouthWest Fest and got lots of great feedback from across the world, just by having videos posted - far more than I would have with a photo."

|||||

What my work is communicating is important to me. I think that real success comes using your creativity to express authenticity and that it connects with your audience/readers. For example, I feel successful when I know I've created a good story that I am proud of.

What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?

I've always felt a conflict between the drive to be creative and to run a normal life. It's a constant balancing act between creativity and fulfilment on the one hand and money and stability on the other.

It can also be hard focussing on finding larger audiences. You can feel like a beginner having to sell yourself every single time and experience isn't always valued over self-promotion.

Have you added new skills to your portfolio over time?

I have developed lots more skills than I can list, mostly soft skills from life. Being a parent has helped me develop patience and an ability, among other things, to avoid escalating conflict. I've learned to really listen.

In my 20's I was quite feisty, now I am very diplomatic and can hold my irritation in when people are monopolising a situation. Through teaching, I also know I can create a friendly atmosphere.

Other skills I have developed include public speaking and writing across different media.

In my opinion, the things that make you more successful in life are listening, parking your ego and being open to new ideas.



>>Snapshot

Rachel Sambrooks

Writer/Performer

Equity

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

When you are experienced, you can fall into the trap of thinking you know it all, or that there is nothing left to learn because you've done it all before. Also, I have some social anxiety which can mean I tend to avoid the very situations I need to engage in.

Now I think that learning new things wakes you up again. I've recently started drawing classes, which has really stimulated new thinking for me.

What FEU Training courses have you attended?

- Get Noticed
- Building your Confidence
- Run a Social Media Campaign
- Write that book and get it published
- Blogging for Freelancers
- Mobile Video Kick Starter

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

All the training days I've attended have given me a lot more confidence. I have walked away with new skills from each one.

The CV day was really good for helping me to think about what I've done and am doing now. It was really powerful for me focussing on everything I've done and bringing it together to identify what I do well, in order to identify my unique selling point (USP). In fact, I just got a job from using my new CV!

Since attending the social media workshop, I feel more confident and connected as I am definitely using the Internet and social media more effectively and I have now joined Instagram. My social media use is now based on the value it brings and I have a specific purpose in mind. I ran a campaign for my show straight after the workshop and got a couple of extra audience members.

The video day has got me using films from events which I then post on Instagram. I was recently Poet in Residence for SouthWest Fest and got lots of great feedback from

.....
"What is brilliant is that even if you are going through a fallow time, you can still do an FEU Training workshop where you can meet up with lovely people, network and learn something."

across the world, just by having videos posted - far more than I would have with a photo.

What has encouraged you to attend FEU training?

The first workshop I attended was Building Confidence and I thought, "Can you really get a free workshop like this?" The quality was really good and I was so surprised it was free.

It's so great to come along to a workshop and meet people working at a similar level to you. It makes you feel less isolated. I always come out with more confidence.

It's interesting meeting people across the unions. I feel I understand the musicians as they have a similar work pattern, but the journalists fascinate me because of their focus on research and integrity. It's a great place to meet similar people. I'm often the only comedian or poet there but did once meet a comedy writer.

What is brilliant is that even if you are going through a fallow time, you can still do an FEU Training workshop where you can meet up with lovely people, network and learn something. It's continual professional development (CPD) for creative people.

