

# **Recession-Proof**

**INSIDE**: How to Start & Grow a Highly-Profitable  
Freelance Business From Zero to \$10k/m  
(Even In a Down Economy)

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## Introduction

# How to “Recession Proof” Your Mindset

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*"You were born to win, but to be a winner, you must plan to win, prepare to win, and expect to win."*

— Zig Ziglar

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We live in uncertain times.

Inflation is out of control. Interest rates are up. Food and gas prices have skyrocketed. Stocks, crypto, and real estate have all seen recent drops in value.

No one knows exactly how the next couple of years will unfold.

But experts agree that we're long overdue for a recession.<sup>1</sup>

At this point, it's not a question of “if” but *when*.

So, what should you do to protect yourself?

The answer:

**Start and grow a highly-profitable freelance business.**

Why?

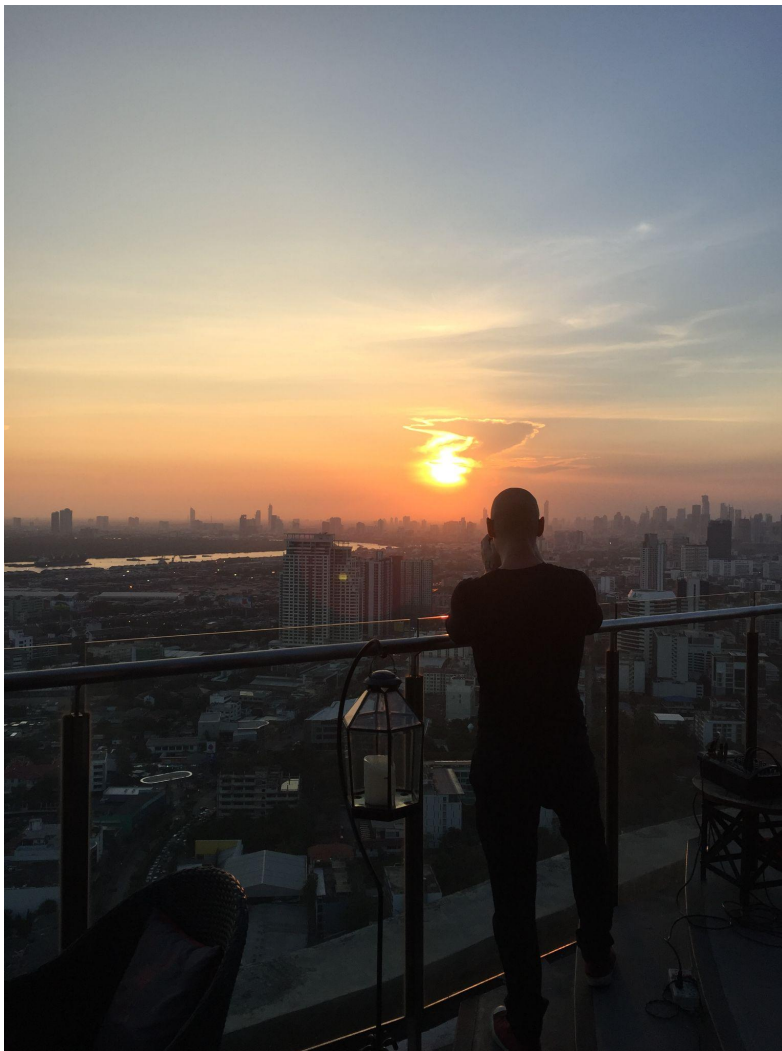
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.barrons.com/articles/fed-inflation-mistakes-recession-credibility-51655474032>

For starters, service businesses have very low startup costs and very high profit margins.

Second, having a remote business means you can travel, work from anywhere, and set your own schedule.

You can just as easily work from a three-bedroom house in Brooklyn as a rooftop bar in Bangkok.



My freelance business allowed me to spend 8 months traveling across Southeast Asia and catch plenty of sunsets like this one.

Third, running a freelance business is like getting paid to do your MBA.

That's because business owners generating 100k/yr, \$1M/yr, or even \$10M/yr+ will pay you handsome fees to step in and perform valuable services for them, like writing ads, designing landing pages, or speaking with potential customers on the phone.

In turn, you get to see how successful businesses operate from the inside.

All while you continue to level up your skills and income.

Imagine getting paid to learn, and then getting a raise every time you pass another test.

Sounds crazy, right?

In college, maybe.

But when you're a freelancer, that's exactly what happens.

It tips the balance of power in YOUR favor.

But finally — and most importantly — freelancers who specialize in the right skills are ALWAYS in high demand, no matter whether the economy is going up, down, or sideways.

For example:

- 41% of the American workforce freelanced in 2020<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://freelancinghacks.com/20-mind-blowing-freelancing-statistics-remote-work-future/>

- Over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of US small businesses report hiring freelancers in the last two years<sup>3</sup>
- Freelancing platform Upwork now has 5M+ client accounts (and 100,000+ open job postings every day)<sup>4</sup>

In fact, recent studies predict up to 50% of the American workforce will be made up of freelancers in the next 10 years.<sup>5</sup>

And in this guide, we're going to show you a simple, step-by-step approach to launching and growing a highly-profitable client business, even if you're brand new with no experience.

But there's one important thing you must do first:

### **Recession-proof your mindset.**

Because your thoughts dictate your reality.

And the people who thrive in hard times don't let external circumstances stop them from taking action.

As Morpheus says, you've got to free your mind.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.zippia.com/advice/freelancing-statistics/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.zippia.com/advice/freelancing-statistics/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elainepofeldt/2017/10/17/are-we-ready-for-a-workforce-that-is-50-freelance/?sh=6cf541943f82>



Freelancing is a vehicle to retake control over your lifestyle and your income no matter what the economy is doing. If you're ready to empty your cup, we can show you how.

In other words, winners find a way to win.

The fact that you're reading this right now proves you want to be a winner.

So here are few tips to help you *prepare* to win by cultivating a recession-proof mindset:

### **1) Opportunities change, but they don't disappear**

When the pandemic hit, many people thought the economy would grind to a halt.

But did it?

No.

Consumers didn't *stop* buying stuff.

They did change what they bought, though.

Hotels, resorts, airlines, movie theaters, and music festivals suffered.

Meanwhile, companies selling toilet paper, hand sanitizer, camping gear, firearms, and health supplements couldn't stock their shelves fast enough.

New economic conditions create new opportunities.

So going into a challenging economy or even a recession doesn't mean all the opportunities are going to disappear.

It just means they're going to change.

In fact, that's what makes freelancing the ultimate recession-proof business.

Because you don't have to change WHAT you do, only WHO you do it for.

And the good news is, by following the step-by-step approach we've laid out inside this document, you can position your freelance business to profit from these coming changes.

## **2) Focus on inputs, not outputs**

If you study successful entrepreneurs like Elon Musk, Warren Buffett, and Jeff Bezos, there's one common thread:

They focus on systems, not outcomes.

Focus on taking the right actions daily and the results will follow:

- getting up early
- reading books
- listening to podcasts
- exercising

- going for walks
- studying & practicing your craft

Feed your mind high-quality inputs and you will get high-quality outputs.

### **3) When you have a high-income skill, you are not an “expense” for clients**

Not all freelance businesses thrive in a recession.

The one thing that sets profitable, recession-proof businesses apart from those that suffer or even go under is high-income skills.

In the next section, we'll define exactly what a high-income skill is and list out some of our favorites.

But for now, here's what you need to know:

High-income skills can be applied to create value (in the form of revenues and profits) for other businesses.

So as a freelancer, you are not an “expense” to a client.

You are an investment.

Clients hire you to make an investment in the growth of their business.

And if anything, freelancers with high-income skills are in even HIGHER demand during a recession.

So don't let the doomsday headlines get to you.

This is the perfect time to start a freelance business.



And now we're going to show you exactly how to do it.

Let's dive into Part 1.

## STEP 1

### Pick Your High-Income Skill

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*“Don’t follow your passion, but let it follow you in your quest to become really good at what you do.”*

— Cal Newport

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The first and most important step in building a money making freelance business is picking your high-income skill.

This is NOT about “following your passion.”

Instead, focus on what

There are three main criteria we use to define high-income skills.

**CRITERIA #1: Gives you leverage to earn more** 

The first step toward generating a high-income is getting away from being paid by the hour.

If you get paid by the hour, the only way to increase your income is to jack up your hourly rate.

But that can be tricky to do...

Especially with existing clients.

Plus there's no incentive for you to actually work faster — because if you do, you're actually taking money out of your own pocket.

**A better option is to charge a flat fee or fixed rate for an entire project.**

This way, you ARE incentivized to work faster. Because the faster you get the job done, the higher your effective hourly rate is.

For example, if you get paid \$50 per hour, it would take you 100 hours to earn \$5,000. But if you charge \$5,000 for an entire project and get it done in 35 hours, then your effective hourly rate shoots up to \$142 per hour.

Make sense?

There are plenty of other ways to structure your compensation as a freelancer (like a royalty or revenue share deal) but fixed rates are the easiest place to start.

Moving on...

**CRITERIA #2: Can be done from anywhere** ✈️🌍🌴

Unless you've been dreaming of becoming a doctor or a lawyer or a marine biologist...

Chances are, you're looking for work that does not require your physical presence...

And can be done from anywhere in the world.

Whether that's on a sandy beach in Thailand, a high-rise condo in Columbus, or a basement in the suburbs.

So for our purposes...

**To qualify as a high-income skill, it's gotta be 100% remote.**

Plus when the work happens out of sight, it's easier to charge a higher rate.

Lastly, and most importantly, we have...

**CRITERIA #3: Gives you proximity to the sale** 💰🇨🇪

“Proximity to the sale” means your work has a direct impact on whether someone buys or not.

And the closer you are to the sale, the more money you can make.

In other words...

**You must be able to easily trace sales, revenue, and profits for your clients directly back to YOUR work.**

For example...

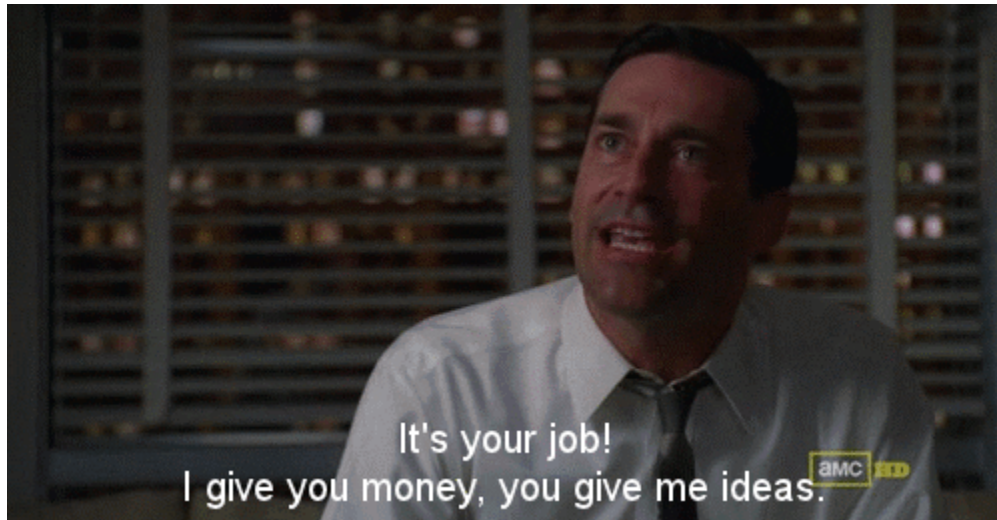
- Subscribers read an ad you wrote
- Sales come from a page you designed
- Prospects speak to you on the phone before signing up

Typically, the closer you are to the sale, the more you get paid.

High-income skills are what allow some freelancers to thrive in a recession while others can't find work.

Now, let's review our top four high-income skills:

## **HIGH-INCOME SKILL #1: Copywriting**



### **What is copywriting?**

The simplest definition of copywriting is to write words that sell. Not to be confused with copyrights, patents, or trademarks... copywriting has nothing to do with the law.

Copywriters write sales copy.

“Sales copy” refers to the written text you see in ads, emails, sales videos, etc. These are carefully-chosen words aimed to get the reader to take a specific action, whether that’s clicking on an ad, subscribing to a newsletter, or buying a product.

NOTE: Don’t confuse copywriting with content writing either.

Content writing usually means articles, blog posts, social media posts, free guides, etc., while copywriting always refers to sales material.

Content writing is not a high-income skill.

## **What makes copywriting a high-income skill?**

Copywriting is a high-income skill because business owners need sales copy to sell their products and services.

In other words, copywriters have extreme “proximity” to the sale. You can almost always trace back the sale of a specific product to a specific ad, email, sales page, etc., that a copywriter has written.

This is why skilled copywriters have the potential to generate a massive ROI for their clients. Which gives them the ability to command premium rates for their services (sometimes even including recurring royalties).

## **What makes a good copywriter?**



- Enjoys doing research & learning about new things
- Very intellectually curious
- In touch with their own emotions
- Empathetic and can easily put themselves in someone else’s shoes
- Likes to write (duh)
- Pays attention to pop culture

## **What do copywriting jobs look like?**

The scope of copywriting jobs can vary widely.

Here are some of the most common things copywriters get paid to write:

- Ads (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc)

- Emails (single broadcasts or multi-part sequences)
- Landing pages
- Opt-in pages
- Sales pages
- Video sales letters (VSLs)
- Video scripts



## **HIGH-INCOME SKILL #2: Paid Ads (Media Buying)**



### **What is media buying?**

Media buying is the planning, creation, and management of paid advertising campaigns. When you pay someone else to place an ad in a space they own (whether that's a billboard outside your local gym or a post in your friend's Facebook news feed), you are literally “buying” that media.

That's where the name comes from.

Media buyers control where ads are shown, what the ads look like, who sees them, how much to spend on them, how long the ads run for, etc.

### **What makes media buying a high-income skill?**

Media buying is a high-income skill because many businesses (and especially the big and profitable ones) rely on paid advertising to acquire new customers.

Organic reach (writing a blog post or posting on social media) will only get you so far.

But if you know that for every \$1 you spend to show someone an ad, you'll get \$2, \$3, or \$5+ back -- you can grow a business very fast.

That's why business owners will always pay top dollar for people who know how to do this. And similarly to copywriters, media buyers also have good proximity to the sale. They can often point to specific ROAS (return on ad spend) from their campaigns to justify their compensation.

## What makes a good media buyer?



- High attention to detail
- Data-driven
- Enjoys working with numbers & spreadsheets
- Strategic thinker
- Pays attention to pop culture

## What do media buying jobs look like?

Media buying jobs vary much less than copywriting jobs.

Why?

Because once a paid ad campaign is launched, it needs to be managed and optimized -- often on a daily basis.

Typically, media buying jobs involve:

- Campaign planning & research
- Campaign creation

- Ongoing campaign optimization
- Reporting

## **HIGH-INCOME SKILL #3: Graphic Design**



### **What is graphic design?**

Graphic design is creating visual elements to communicate ideas. This could be as simple as a business card, or as complex as a long-form sales page or video presentation.

Out of all the skills on this list, it's one you're most likely familiar with already, so we won't belabor the point.

### **What makes graphic design a high-income skill?**

Graphic design is a high-income skill because visual elements like images and videos are huge needle movers when it comes to marketing and sales.

For example, thumbnail images are one of the biggest factors for success on YouTube. Book covers are one of the biggest factors for success on Amazon. And overall design can have a massive impact on the conversion rate of a webpage.

Any one of these things can be worth thousands, tens of thousands, or even millions to the right business. So designers play an important role in any industry-leading company.

## What makes a good graphic designer?



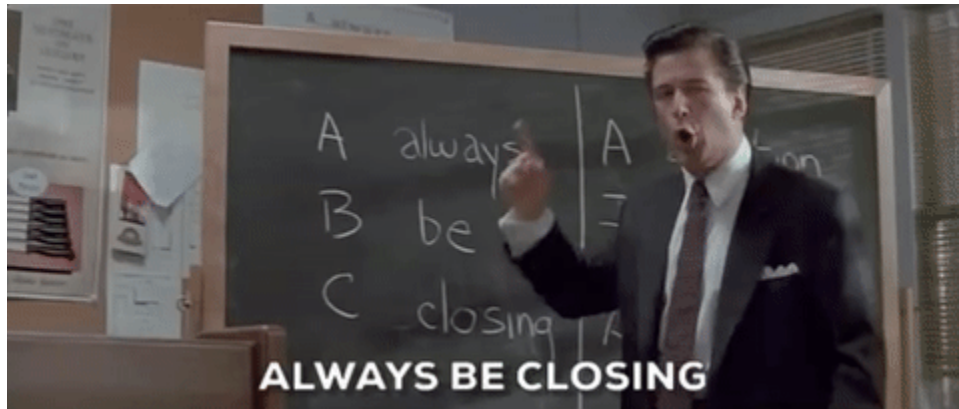
- Skilled designer
- Thinks visually
- Very tech savvy
- Understands marketing

## What do graphic design jobs look like?

Much like copywriting, the scope of graphic design jobs can vary quite widely:

- Images
- Videos
- Logos
- Icons
- Book covers
- Webpages
- And more

## **HIGH-INCOME SKILL #4: Remote Sales**



### **What is remote sales?**

Remote sales is essentially phone sales. Except sometimes you might be on video as well, so really it's more like Zoom sales.

One key distinction though, is that you're generally dealing with warm, inbound leads that have been generated by marketing — as opposed to cold calling people or going around knocking on doors.

In other words, these are people who've expressed interest in achieving a certain result (i.e. one the product you're selling can provide), and have agreed to speak with you to discuss it further.

Your job as the closer is to persuade them to sign up.

### **What makes remote sales a high-income skill?**

Remote sales is a high-income skill because it has as much (if not more) proximity to the sale than any other skill on this list.

You're speaking to prospects on the phone and trying to enroll them in a high-ticket program that typically costs anywhere from \$5,000 - \$10,000 or more.

To put this in perspective, if the program you're selling costs \$10,000, and you enroll 30 people in a month, that's \$300,000 in revenue.

As you can imagine, business owners are often willing to pay a hefty commission for sales like that.

## **What makes a good remote sales professional?**



- Confident
- Empathetic and can easily put themselves in someone else's shoes
- Outgoing and high-energy
- Not afraid of sales or rejection
- Has invested in high-ticket programs in the past
- Highly-motivated to succeed

## **What do remote sales jobs look like?**

- Appointment setting
- Closing
- Coaching & consulting

## STEP 2

### Design Your Daily Habit

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*“If you want to succeed, if you want to achieve all your outcomes, you have to think of success as a process, a way of life, a habit of mind, a strategy for life.”*

— **Tony Robbins**

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Daily habits are the fastest path to competency and eventually mastery.

The more you practice, the better you get.

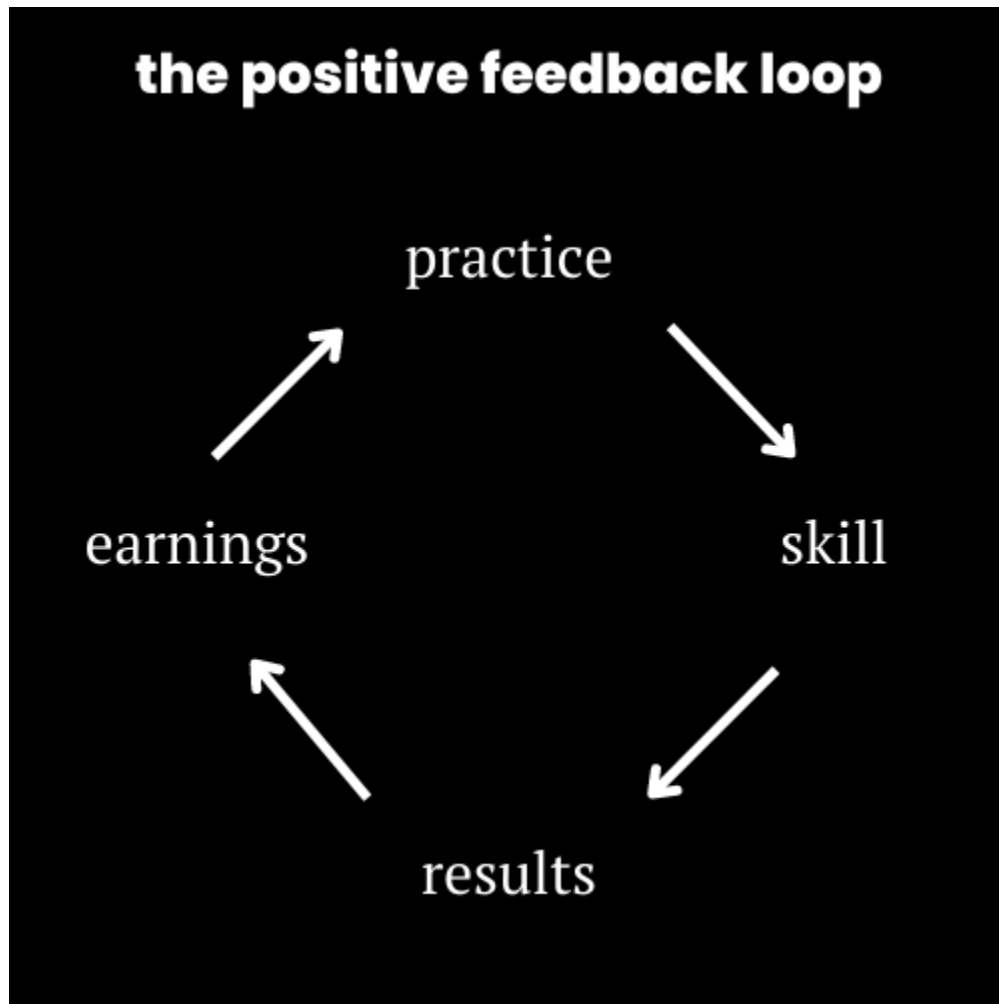
The better you get, the more results you can produce.

And the more results you can produce, the more you can earn.

This creates a positive feedback loop.

Here’s a visualization:





The best part is, you don't need anyone's permission.

You can renegotiate with every new client you get.

Just imagine being able to go from making \$20/hour to \$200/hour — but doing it in six months instead of six years like in most other professions.

When you pick the right high-income skill and design the right daily habit, you can make it happen.

Even better, as a freelancer, you can decouple your income from your time.

By charging per deliverable or per project, you can stop getting paid by the hour and trading time for the money...

And start getting paid strictly for the RESULTS your work can produce.

But your results are dependent on your skills.

And your skills come from your daily habit.

So, let's break it down:

## **PART A: Study**

To map out the study portion of your daily habit, ask yourself this question:

**Which do you have more of – time or money?**

If you have more time than money, focus on free resources.

If you have more money than time, focus on paid resources.

Paid products and courses can shortcut your learning curve...

But there's more than enough free information out there to teach you the basics of any one of the high-income skills we've listed in this guide.

In the end, what matters most is that you get started as soon as possible.

So here are some free resources for each skill to get you going:

### **Copywriting:**

- [Free Copywriting Course from CopywritingCourse.com](#)
- [Copywriting 101 from Copyblogger](#)
- [What is Copywriting? From Digital Marketer](#)

### **Media Buying:**

- [Learn Facebook Ads with Jon Loomer](#)
- [AdSkills Blog](#)
- [Meta \(Facebook Ads\) Blueprint Certification](#)

## **Graphic Design:**

- [19 Free eBooks All Designers Should Read by Toptal](#)
- [Graphic Design - Your Complete Guide by Learn Hub](#)
- [25 graphic design tips for non-designers and beginners by Canva](#)

## **Remote Sales:**

- [7-Figure Selling Secrets FB Group from Cole Gordon](#)
- [How to Be Successful at Remote Sales from HubSpot](#)
- [4 Techniques for Closing Sales and Getting More Clients From Traffic & Funnels](#)

Now there's one major pitfall to avoid here...

## **Information overwhelm.**

This embarrassment of riches creates a paradox of choice.

Who do you learn from? Who do you ignore?

It's no easy task.



This is what it feels like when you go down the freelancing rabbit hole for the first time.

That's why the secret to avoiding information overwhelm is...

Choose 1-2 experts to learn from and ignore everyone else.

- Consume everything they put out
- Implement their strategies as best you can
- Find out what works and what doesn't before moving on

Learning a high-income skill like copywriting, sales, or paid ads can feel like drinking from a firehose.

You need to control the flow of information you're taking in.

Otherwise your head will explode.

And the only way to do that effectively is to narrow your focus.

## **PART B: Practice**

Theory is nothing without application.

So the next step is to find ways to practice your high-income skill every day.

Before I go any further, though...

Here's a painful truth you need to accept:

**You will suck at first.**

This is a normal part of learning.

The reason most people get stuck in life and are unable to achieve their goals is because they're afraid to look silly.

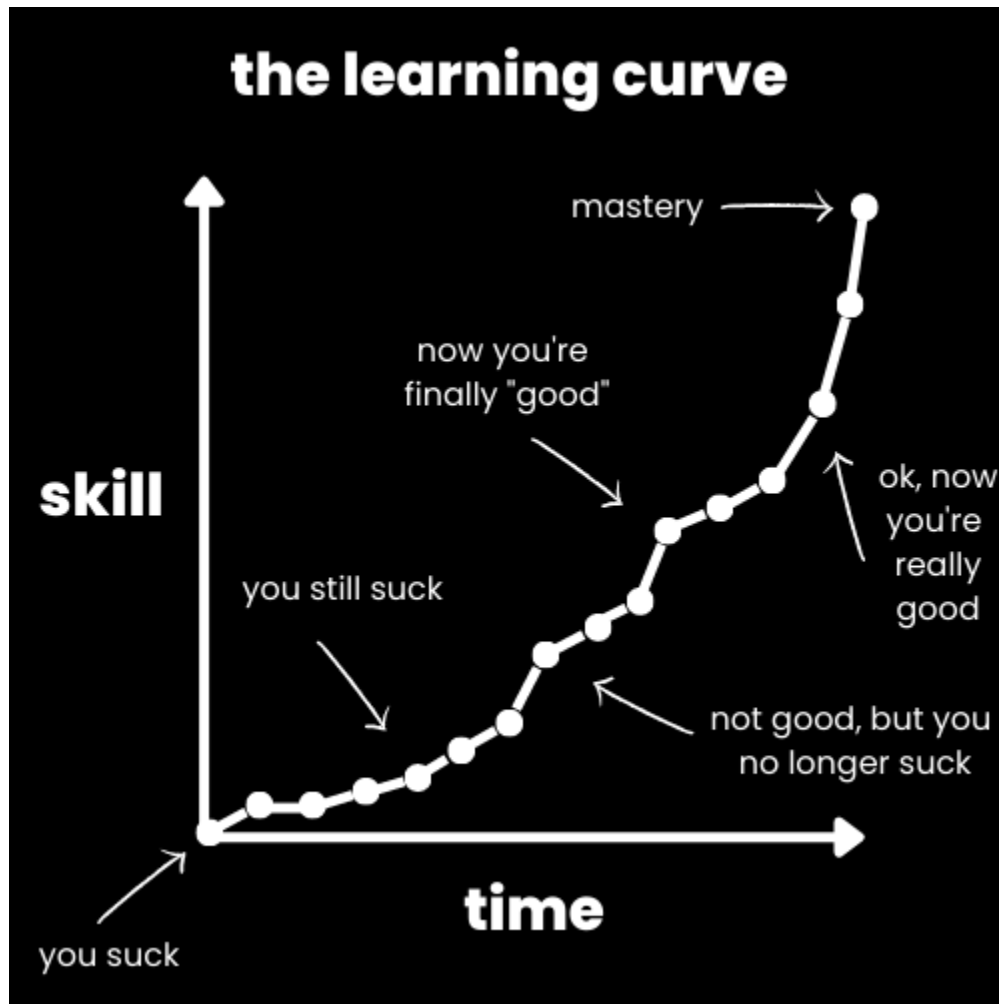
They're afraid to suck at something.

But remember this:

Anyone who is highly-skilled at something was once bad at it.

You don't go from zero to A-List overnight.

This is what a normal learning curve looks like:



Keep this in mind as you start practicing your high-income skill.

Now here are few daily practice suggestions to get you going:

**Copywriting:**

- Write an ad
- Write an email
- Hand copy a sales letter

### **Media buying:**

- Create a campaign plan
- Find an a live ad to include in your swipe file
- Research a customer avatar for a potential client

### **Graphic design:**

- Design a logo
- Design a social media banner
- Design a multi-part story ad for Instagram

### **Remote sales**

- Record yourself pitching
- Do a mock call / roleplay with a friend

Don't overcomplicate it.

And try not to practice the same things everyday.

It's good to shake up your routine and complete different tasks.

**Aim to spend at least one hour a day on your daily habit.**

If you've got more time to spare, then of course, you can do more.

But as we'll discuss in the next section, creating momentum is essential in the early stages of your freelance business.

And if you want to progress quickly, you need to be spending at least an hour a day on it.



Now let's talk about how to land your first client.

### STEP 3

## Land Your First Client

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*“Momentum solves 80% of your problems.”*

– John C. Maxwell

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By now, you should have picked your high-income skill and begun designing your daily habit.

So it’s time to start looking for clients.

**And to be clear: you should start looking for clients right away.**

Why?

Because landing clients is a skill of its own.

As a freelancer, you don’t have a marketing department to fall back on.

You’re responsible for promoting yourself.

And you need to get comfortable with that fact so you can learn how to do it better.

But the good news is, landing your first (or next) client is much easier than you think.

I'm about to show you how.

Just don't let your lack of experience stop you from taking action.

Creating momentum is the goal here...

Because every client you land will build your confidence and make the next one come even easier.



SPOTTED: You after landing your first freelance client.

Now, there are three main channels you can use to get clients:

- 1) Referrals & word of mouth
- 2) Cold outreach
- 3) Freelance platforms

Let's briefly review each one:

## 1) Referrals & Word of Mouth



Referrals and word of mouth always make for the best clients.

They're pre-framed to trust you because someone else has endorsed you or recommended you.

Which also increases your perceived value.

The only problem is, as a new freelancer, you're not in a position to leverage this channel yet.

You don't have any wins, testimonials, or case studies to share.

You don't have any happy clients to evangelize you.

Heck, you may not even know anyone who needs the services you can provide.

So it doesn't make sense to focus on this channel in the beginning.

But we will circle back to this later, because maximizing referrals and word of mouth is key to growing your freelance business once you've got a few clients.

## 2) Cold Outreach



This is what can happen when you go after people who have demonstrated zero intent.  
You don't know if they even have a need for your services.

Cold outreach means sending messages to people you don't know to see if they'd be interested in hiring you.

This is typically done via email or on social media.

But the problem with cold outreach is *intent*.

No one you reach out to has said they actually WANT what you're selling.

So you're immediately bumping up against that resistance.

Because most people are annoyed when they get an unsolicited sales pitch in their inbox or in their DMs.

They're most likely to say no or simply not respond.

Essentially, you've gotta convince someone who had NO intention of hiring a freelancer before speaking with you to change their mind and hire you.

And don't get me wrong — it can absolutely be done.

I know plenty of freelancers and agency owners who've built their businesses strictly with cold outreach.

But as a new freelancer, the dynamics are working against you.

The tools you need to convert cold prospects into clients (lots of credibility, testimonials and a bold, results-based promise) are not in your toolkit yet.

Which brings us to the third and final channel.

### 3) Freelance Platforms



When freelancers realize they don't need to spend all day DM'ing strangers because there are millions of clients posting paid jobs every day on platforms like Upwork and Freelancer.com.

Freelance platforms solve the intent problem.

Instead of going after ice cold prospects who may or may not even want the service you provide...

You're targeting people who have demonstrated a need and are actively looking for the solution.

These are paying clients who are looking to hire someone ASAP.

That's intent.

And if you're a brand new freelancer, this is the best place to start.



Just about anyone can apply to any job, so the playing field is about as level as it's ever gonna get.

Plus, as you land and complete freelance gigs on the platform, you also build powerful social proof in the form of ratings and reviews.

This creates a “snowball” effect, making each gig easier to land than the last.

Now, where to start?

Well, there are a pile of freelance platforms out there:

- [Upwork](#)
- [Freelancer.com](#)
- [Guru](#)
- [Fiverr](#)
- [FreeUp](#)
- [Toptal](#)

Just to name a few.

**But our favorite here at The Gig is Upwork.**

Let me explain...

## **Why Upwork is the #1 Freelancing Platform For Beginners & Seasoned Vets**

Story time:

I started my freelance business back in 2016.

I was a massage therapist at the time, making 30k per year...

And I was miserable.

That's when I first stumbled across freelance copywriting, and by extension, Upwork.

I read stories from people who were making a full time living on the platform (like [this one](#) and [this one](#)).

I couldn't believe it.

So I said to myself, "if they can do it, so can I."

(Side note: I think it's important to have a bit of a chip on your shoulder in the beginning. Because you DO have something to prove.)

Anyway, despite having NO copywriting or marketing experience, I was able to replace my full-time income in just 3 months.

Now, was it so easy that a monkey with an iPhone could do it?

Not quite.

But it was a helluva easier than you might think.

And here's why:

- (+) Upwork has over 5M+ client accounts<sup>6</sup>
- (+) There are over 100,000+ open jobs every day<sup>7</sup>
- (+) Freelancers earn over \$2.52B per year on the platform<sup>8</sup>

The opportunity is real.

Now, you might be thinking...

*“Well that sounds great Jim, but how am I supposed to compete when I’m brand new?”*

It's a legitimate concern and a great question.

The answer comes in two parts:

**#1: As a beginner or intermediate freelancer, you'll start by serving beginner to intermediate business owners.**

Just as there are 7-figure and 8-figure business owners looking to hire A-List freelance talent for their next project...

There are twice as many entrepreneurs who are earlier on in their journey — and they need help too.

They've read *The 4-Hour Workweek* and they know they need to delegate...

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<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upwork>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.zippia.com/advice/freelancing-statistics/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://backlinko.com/upwork-users>

But they don't know any copywriters, media buyers, or graphic designers.

So what are they supposed to do?

They head over to Upwork and put up a posting.

And since they're not running a multimillion dollar business just yet...

They're looking for freelancers who are less experienced and more affordable.

Here are just a few examples:

**Media Buyer for our clients campaigns**

Fixed-price - Intermediate - Est. Budget: \$400 - Posted 3 minutes ago

**YouTube Ads Performance Marketer - ASAP!**

Hourly: \$6.00-\$25.00 - Entry level - Est. Time: 1 to 3 months, Less than 30 hrs/week - Posted 2 hours ago

**Design MailChimp newsletter**

Fixed-price - Entry level - Est. Budget: \$150 - Posted 3 hours ago

**HubSpot email template**

Fixed-price - Entry level - Est. Budget: \$500 - Posted 3 hours ago

Appointment setter for LinkedIn and Instagram

Fixed-price - Entry level - Est. Budget: \$120 - Posted 5 hours ago

Copywriting and PR support

Hourly: \$10.00-\$25.00 - Entry level - Est. Time: 3 to 6 months, Less than 30 hrs/week - Posted 16 hours ago

Copywriter for landing page of self-help website

Hourly: \$15.00-\$50.00 - Intermediate - Est. Time: Less than 1 month, Less than 30 hrs/week - Posted 6 minutes ago

That's the first part.

The second is...

**#2: You need to create an “edge” that makes you stand out even if you’re a new freelancer**

What does this mean?

This means positioning yourself as a specialist within a certain area.

The simplest way to do this is take your high-income skill and combine it with something else you’re familiar with.

Such as:

- Hobbies
- Interests

- Formal education
- Brick and mortar experience

For example, when I started out...

I combined copywriting with my brick and mortar experience in the health niche to position myself as a specialist.

And once I did that, I had a much easier time landing clients who were in that niche.

There's a reason why they say "the riches are in the niches."

So spend some time thinking about how you can create an edge for yourself.

Now, let's talk about exactly how to land your first client, step-by-step.

## How to Land Your First Freelance Client On Upwork

The process is quite simple:

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### 1) Go to the [website](#) and sign up

It's free to create an account and anyone can sign up. As of this writing, you receive 10 Connects per month with your free account that you can use to apply to jobs.

If you want more Connects, you can purchase them in a bundle or upgrade to Plus for \$14.99/mo and get 80 Connects per month (but these are both optional).

### 2) Set up your freelance profile

The next step is to create your profile. Here, you'll fill in things like education, experience, employment history, certifications, languages spoken, etc.

You can also take tests to prove your competence in certain areas, plus add portfolio pieces, and testimonials from past clients (if you have any).

Lastly, you'll need to set your hourly rate and write a description that encourages clients to hire you.

**IMPORTANT:** You may have to submit your profile 2-3 times to get approved. In fact, it's normal to have your profile disapproved on your first try. If that happens, try to make your profile more specific (by niching down or including a unique-sounding skill set), then resubmit it.

Once your profile does get approved, then you're free to make whatever other edits you'd like to.

**OPTIONAL RESOURCE:** *My co-founder Dorothy Hollabaugh has earned over \$1M+ in freelance fees from Upwork clients. She recently recorded a paid video training for our subscribers that reveals her entire 5-step process for finding and landing clients. If you're interested, [it's available for purchase on our store here](#).*

### 3) Start submitting proposals

Once your profile is approved, you can start submitting proposals and applying to jobs.

You can filter by keyword, experience level, number of proposals, category, job type, project length, and more.

I recommend setting up a variety of Saved Searches to save yourself some time.

**OPTIONAL RESOURCE:** *I developed a simple fill-in-the-blanks proposal template to land clients on Upwork. It's a bit unconventional, but it helped me go from Rising Star to Top-Rated on the platform in just three months. [You can find it here in our online store](#).*

### 4) Get invited to interview

If a client likes your proposal, they'll typically invite you to an interview. This can take place over chat or on a video call.

This is where you'll discuss the client's needs, your past experience, why you think you'd be a good fit for the gig, deliverables, timeline, your quote for the project, and more.



**OPTIONAL RESOURCE:** *I was never great at sales, but I've taken hundreds of sales calls and closed multiple six figures in freelance deals — all thanks to this [Ultimate Freelance Sales Call Cheat Sheet](#). It's a simple, step-by-step roadmap to guide you through your sales calls from beginning to end. If you're brand new to freelancing, I encourage you to check it out.*

## 5) Land your first gig

If the interview goes well and you and the client are able to come to terms on the project, then they'll send you an offer.

Offers can vary depending on the type of project (hourly or fixed rate).

We usually recommend going with fixed rate instead of hourly, but the choice is up to you.

Regardless of which payment option you and the client agree on, once you accept the offer, the gig is officially yours.

It's time to get to work!

**OPTIONAL RESOURCE:** *Onboarding is arguably the most high-stakes aspect of working with clients. Having a structured onboarding process positions you as a high-value professional in the eyes of the client, and helps avoid buyer's remorse. Plus it ensures you get all the information you need from the client to make the project a home run. If you'd like to copy-and-paste my onboarding process, check out the [Digital Marketer's Template Toolkit](#).*

Now, in the early stages, it's a numbers game.

You will have to put in a lot of proposals to get your first interview.

And you'll probably have to do a few interviews before you land your first gig.

That's okay.

Go into it with that expectation.

Because this is not a get rich quick scheme.

Building a highly-profitable freelance business takes work.

And this is where it starts.

Here are a few more tips to help you stand out from the pack.

## **6 Simple Tips to Land Your First (or Next) Freelance Client on Upwork**

### **1) Check it every day**

Speed matters.

Most clients on Upwork are looking to hire ASAP, so the faster you can respond, the better your chances are.

Make it a habit of checking for new gigs at least once a day.

### **2) Submit relevant samples**

The #1 most important factor in a winning proposal is relevance:

- task relevance
- niche or market relevance

For example:

If you're applying for an email copywriting gig in the health niche, submit email samples in the health niche. Or if you're applying for a video editing gig in the biz opp space, submit biz opp video samples.

### **3) Create custom samples if you don't have relevant ones**

Don't have relevant samples to submit?

Take the time to create some. Especially if you're new to the platform.

The purpose of submitting relevant samples is so clients don't have to imagine what your work will be like in a different medium or market.

This is an easy way to get your reps in too.

Paint the picture for them.

That's how you get hired.

#### **4) Aim low at first**

If you have no results, don't be afraid to work for very little at first.

Go for smaller projects.

Because reviews are worth 10X the project fee in the beginning.

And it's a much lower-risk decision for the client to hire you.

Plus you'll be able to raise your rates very quickly once you get going.

#### **5) Ask for reviews**

One of the biggest benefits to freelancing on Upwork is the social proof.

So you should be doing everything you can to over deliver and provide a 5-star experience to clients.

Then make a personal appeal for an honest review (not just a rating) when the job is done.

Every 5-star review you get makes the next client easier to land.

## **6) Don't be afraid to apply to older jobs**

Even though you're much more likely to get hired for jobs that have just been posted...

Don't be afraid to apply to older jobs either.

Sometimes clients aren't able to interview people right away, and by the time they are, the freelancers they wanted are booked or don't respond.

And sometimes clients just don't get any good applications.

I've had a lot of success applying to older jobs with something like:

*"Hey, I can see this job has been open for XX days, but I wanted to apply anyway just in case you weren't able to find the right freelancer the first time around."*

The results may surprise you.

## STEP 4

### The R-R-R Framework: Rinse, Raise, Repeat

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*“Everyone wants to live on top of the mountain, but all the happiness and growth occurs while you're climbing it.”*

— **Andy Rooney**

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Your first successful client project is officially in the books.

Now what?

**Rinse, raise, repeat.**

Translation:

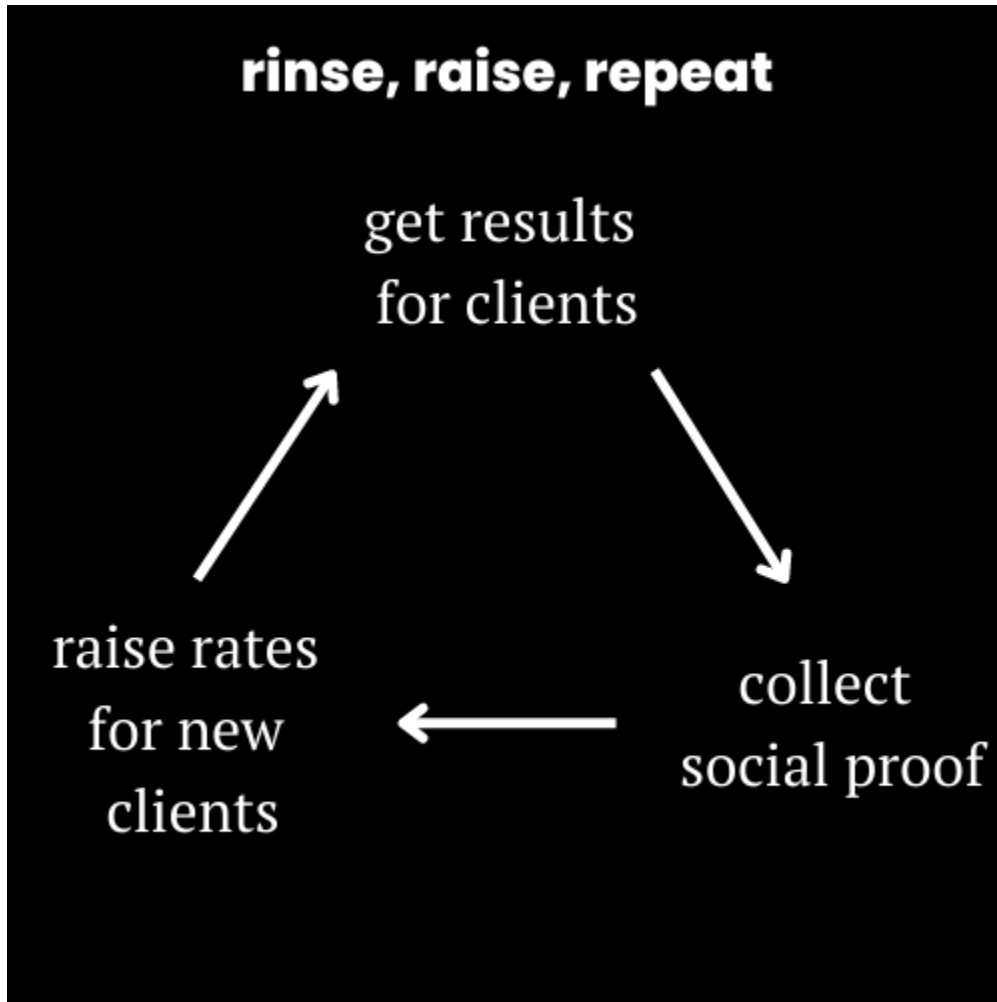
Do whatever it takes to get results for your clients.

And then prioritize reviews, testimonials, and case studies over short-term earnings.

Because you'll use that proof to raise your rates for new clients.

That's how you get to \$10k/m and beyond.

Here's another handy-dandy diagram to help you visualize it:



Now let's tackle the individual ingredients.

## **Getting More Clients**

The easiest way to get more clients is to double down on what's already working.

So once you find success on Upwork, don't take your foot off the gas.

Keep pushing. Keep applying to jobs. Keep building momentum.

But at this point, you can also expand your client acquisition efforts if you want to.

Here are a few other places to look for clients:

### **Copywriting:**

- Freelancing platforms (Fiverr, Freelancer, etc)
- Job boards (LinkedIn, Indeed)
- Industry-specific job boards (DirectResponseCopyJobs.com)
- Facebook groups (Cult of Copy Job Board)

### **Media Buying:**

- Freelancing platforms (Fiverr, Freelancer, etc)
- Job boards (LinkedIn, Indeed)
- Industry-specific job boards (AdSkills ProLeague)
- Facebook groups

### **Graphic Design:**

- Freelancing platforms (Fiverr, Freelancer, etc)
- Job boards (LinkedIn, Indeed)



- Industry-specific job boards (Dribbble, Design Jobs Board)

**Remote sales:**

- Freelancing platforms (Fiverr, Freelancer, etc)
- Job boards (LinkedIn, Indeed)
- Industry-specific job boards (Closers.com)
- Facebook groups (7-Figure Selling Secrets)

## Asking For Testimonials



Now the next question is...

### **When should you ask for a testimonial?**

The answer is:

Ask for a 2-minute video testimonial as soon as you've scored a win or successfully completed a project.

(And to be clear: when I say "testimonial," I'm talking about something in addition to a rating and review on your Upwork profile.)

Clients will almost never volunteer testimonials on their own...

So you've gotta ask for it.

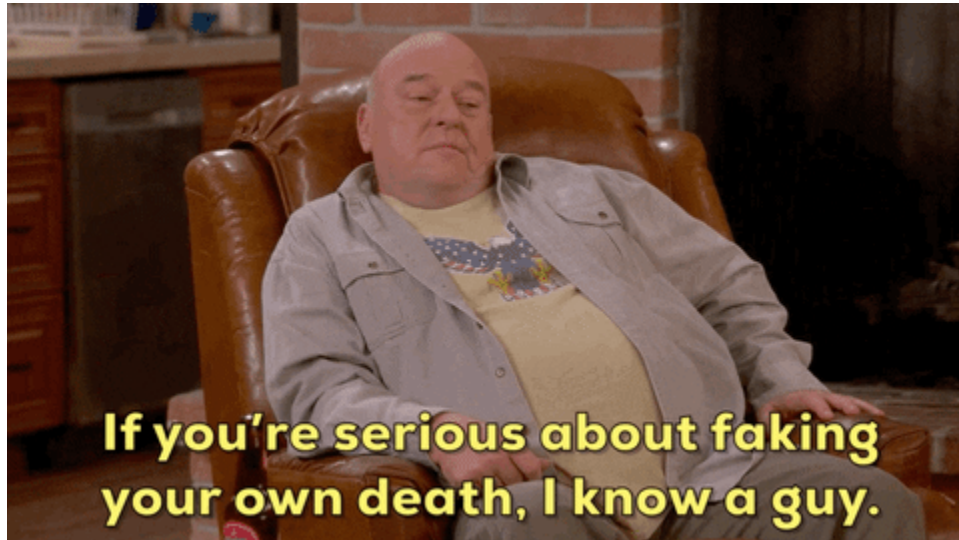
And you don't want to wait too long.

So make sure to put in the request while you're both riding high on the heels of a job well done.

Plus, this way, you can transcribe it to text and have their testimonial in both written and video form.

Next we have...

## Asking For Referrals



FACT: Everyone likes to “have a guy.”

Depending on your relationship, you may also want to ask for a referral after getting a testimonial.

Keep it simple and straightforward by saying something like...

*“Given how we’ve been able to [achieve client’s desired result], I wondered if you might know anyone else looking to [achieve desired result]. I’m looking to fill a spot on my client roster and I’d love to help someone in your network achieve similar results.”*

That’s it.

You can also get creative and incentivize them by offering a discount, gift card, bonus, or referral fee.

Bottom line is:

**Referred clients are typically much higher-quality than those found via cold outreach or on freelancing platforms.**

Plus, everyone likes to “have a guy.”

It allows us to build social capital by playing the connector.

So when it comes to finding new clients, don’t be afraid to start with your existing client base.

## Raising Your Rates



REVEALED: The average freelancer's pricing strategy.

On Upwork, you can raise the hourly rate on your profile in just a few clicks.

And setting a higher hourly rate helps anchor your value to prospective clients.

But raising your actual rates can be a little trickier than it sounds.

Especially if you're new to freelancing.

So here are a few practical tips on how to do it:

(+) Raise your rates as demand for your services increases (or once your client roster is full)

(+) Aim to increase prices by 10-20%

(+) Start by raising your rates just for new clients

(+) If raising rates on existing clients, explain that your new rate structure will allow you to spend more time and energy on their account - but also be prepared for them to leave

As a freelancer, you're more likely to *undercharge* than *OVERcharge*...

But that doesn't mean you should arbitrarily increase your rates by 5X either.

**Focus on the value and ROI you're delivering for your clients.**

Use that as a barometer to gauge what you should be charging.

## Getting to \$10k Per Month



What it feels like when you have your first \$10k month.

For most freelancers, hitting \$10k per month is their first big goal.

I know it was for me.

So what's the easiest way to get there?

### **Recurring revenue.**

Look to find clients who have an ongoing need for your services.

- For copywriters, this could be email marketing
- For media buyers, this could be managing paid ad campaigns
- For graphic designers, this could be producing ad creatives
- For remote sales reps, this could be setting appointments



Now copywriters and graphic designers may have to work a little bit harder on this...

Because one-off projects are much more common in those lines of work.

But media buyers and remote sales reps have recurring revenue basically built-in to their job descriptions.

And by focusing on recurring revenue...

It only takes:

- 5 clients @ \$2k/m
- 4 clients @ \$2.5k/m
- 2 clients @ \$5k/m

... to hit \$10k per month.

**Another way to hit \$10k/m faster is to negotiate performance-based compensation.**

This is typically a percentage of sales generated by your work.

For example:

- Copywriters may get a % of gross revenue
- Media buyers may get a % of monthly ad spend
- Remote sales reps may get a % of cash collected

Now, performance-based components are much more common for some high-income skills (copywriting, media buying, and remote sales) versus others (graphic design).

But no matter which skill you choose...

**Performance-based compensation requires a strong foundation of trust.**

No client will agree to share their profits without it.

So keep this in mind as a goal to work toward...

But don't come out guns blazing and ask for a percentage of gross sales right away.

You should have no trouble hitting \$10k/m without it.

## **BONUS 1**

### **Create an Inbound Client Machine**

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*“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.”*

– **Milton Berle**

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Being able to go out and get clients is great...

But how do you make them come to you?

#### **Build an audience on social media.**

You see, people follow leaders, not experts.

And that’s why creating content on social media is so important for freelancers...

Because content creation *\*is\** leadership.

It’s also DEMONSTRATION.

You’re demonstrating exactly what you can do on a daily basis.

These are two very powerful sales triggers.

(Just ask Billy Mays how many Slap Chops he sold on those hilarious infomercials.)

And even if you're not an A-List service provider with a track record full of big wins...

Sharing your perspective on social media establishes credibility and authority...

Which can lead to lucrative deals you may not have landed otherwise.

You never know who's watching.

There's another reason why building an audience on social media can fast-track the growth of your freelance business.

Let me explain...

**Before someone will hire you to do a job, they have to know (or at least believe) that you can actually do the job.**

Now, most freelancers try to bridge this gap of awareness in the moment...

(as in, when they need to find work)

But it's much easier if you do this in advance.

How?

**Build your network and get to know other people in your industry.**

Because your network is your net worth.

And the more people who know...

- 1) Who you are
- 2 )What you can do

... the more opportunities you'll get.

Plain and simple.

Here are a few ways to get started:

- Join free communities focused around a specific niche or skill
- Build relationships with other service providers on social media
- Buy a product from your favorite content creator to start a more intimate conversation

Bottom line is:

**Become a connector and you'll have more opportunities than you know what to do with.**

Now, let's quickly discuss...

## **Choosing the Right Social Media Platform to Build On**



First things first:

**Pick one social media platform and go all in on it.**

Don't try to be everywhere at once.

Omnipresence is overrated, at least in the beginning.

And each platform has their nuances...

So unless you've got 2-4 hours you can dedicate to creating content every day...

The sacrifice isn't worth it.

Take the time to learn the ins and outs of your platform of choice.

Then, once you've built a following and created some top-performing pieces of content...

You can easily repurpose them on other platforms.

(For example, Dickie Bush recently shared [these impressive results](#) just from posting his top 50 tweets and threads on LinkedIn.)

Now, of course, there's no shortage of platforms to build on:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Etc etc

So ask yourself:

**What type of content do I want to create and where does it fit best?**

If you're a writer, then Twitter or LinkedIn makes the most sense.

If you're a designer or video editor, Instagram or TikTok are obvious choices.

If you're an extroverted sales rep, you might look at TikTok or YouTube.

Try not to overthink it.

And remember:

Your goal is to create content that showcases your expertise and attracts clients.

Here are 4 more tips to building an audience on social media:

- **Post at least once a day** (it's what the algorithm wants)
- **Study what type of content gets the most engagement** (threads on Twitter, carousels on IG, etc)
- **Spend 10-20 minutes a day engaging with other people** (aka don't forget to put the "social" in social media)
- **Set up an email list and promote it in your posts** (so you can build an audience you own vs one that can be taken away from you)

Building an audience on social media creates credibility and authority, demonstrates your skills, and attracts ideal clients.

It also opens up other opportunities for generating revenue, like promoting other people's products or even creating your own.

If you want to take your freelance business to the next level, it's time to start building.



## BONUS 2

### Your Freelance Toolkit

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*“Choose your tools carefully, but not so carefully that you spend more time at the stationery store than at your writing table.”*

— **Natalie Goldberg**

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Tools are great.

But they aren't the most important ingredient in your freelance business.

**Hard work is.**

Don't forget that.

With that out of the way, here are some of our favorite free and low-cost tools to help you run your freelance business.

#### **Writing:**

- [Hemingway](#)

#### **Website & Landing Pages:**

- [Carrd](#)
- [WordPress](#)

- [GeneratePress](#)
- [Divi](#)

### **Hosting:**

- [SiteGround](#)
- [Kinsta](#)

### **Social Media:**

- [TweetHunter](#)

### **Email Marketing**

- [MailChimp](#)
- [ConvertKit](#)
- [SparkLoop](#)

### **Diagrams & Visualizations:**

- [Whimsical](#)
- [Canva](#)

### **Screen Capture & Record:**

- [SnagIt](#)

### **Meetings:**

- [Fireflies.AI](#)
- [Krisp.AI](#)

**Passwords:**

- [LastPass](#)

**Payments:**

- [Wise](#)
- [PayPal](#)
- [Stripe](#)

**Contracts:**

- [HelloSign](#)

**Miscellaneous:**

- [TextExpander](#)

NOTE: Some of the links above are affiliate links, which means if you purchase, we'll receive a small commission (at no extra cost to you).

## CONCLUSION

### On Building a Recession-Proof Business

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*“The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.”*  
— Ernest Hemingway

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Hard times come and go.

But high-income skills can pay the bills for the rest of your life.

Whether the economy is in a recession or not.

The more value you can create for other businesses, the more your own business will prosper.

And mastering a high-income skill is only the first step...

Because as you get better at producing results for clients, the next step is to stack other high-income skills so you can increase your value even more...

And decrease the number of clients you need to fill your calendar or hit your income goals.

**Ultimately, the highest-paid freelancers are those who become “strategic consultants.”**

People who develop a deep understanding of all the key components in marketing strategy:

- Copywriting
- Paid ads
- Funnel strategy
- Offer creation
- Sales
- Customer retention
- And more

When you can provide expert strategic support in these areas for months or even years...

You won't have to look for clients anymore. Instead, you'll have to turn them anyway. And at a certain point, it all becomes a game...

One where YOU are in complete control of everything: time, money, location, relationships, and so much more.

That's the pinnacle of freelancing.

And if you follow the steps laid out in this guide with grit and determination...

I promise you'll get there.

Here's to your success,

**Jim Hamilton**

Co-founder, The Gig

<https://thegig.io/>

[jim@thegig.io](mailto:jim@thegig.io)

P.S:

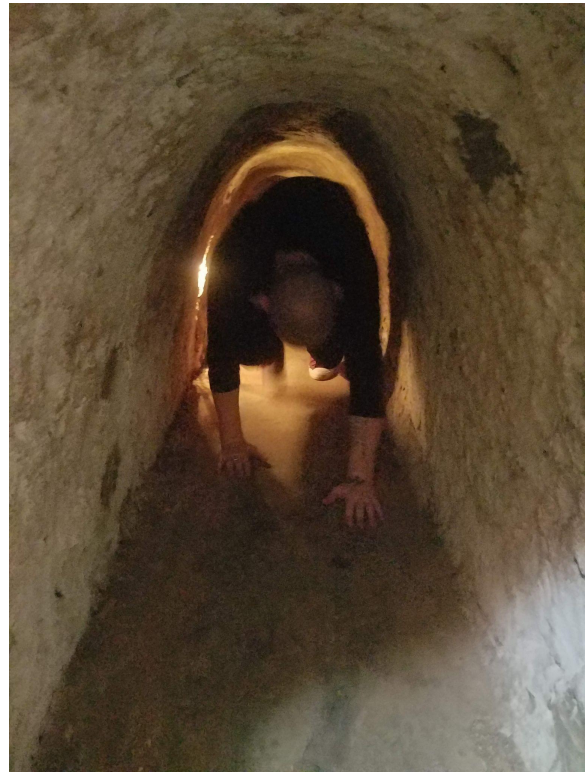
Here are a few other highlights made possible by my freelance business...



Coming face-to-face with Angkor Thom in Cambodia.



Enjoying a bird's eye view of Kuala Lumpur from a rooftop pool across from the Petronas Towers.



Spending Christmas in Chiang Mai and touring the Batu Caves in Malaysia.

Crawling around inside the Cu Chi Tunnels.



Hanging out with my cousins in a 14th-century villa in the Dolomites area of Northern Italy.



Escaping lockdown in beautiful Vancouver, B.C.





Celebrating a friend's birthday in Cancun.



Drinking in the sights from the top of LondonHouse in downtown Chicago.

Okay, so now that you've made it to the very end of this very long guide...

Let me ask:

What's on YOUR bucket list?

Where have you been dying to go?

Because as you can see...

Building a fully remote freelance business can make it possible.

So don't waste another minute.

You owe it to yourself to make your dreams come true.

And the journey begins right here...