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AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ONLINE FREELANCING

Degree Program of International Business
and Marketing Logistics

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The purpose of the thesis was to introduce the readers to the phenomenon of online freelancing from an entrepreneurial point of view, alongside providing an up-to-date guide to undergraduate student about how to become a freelancer in general manners. The thesis is heavily based on the author's own experiences spent as a freelancer graphic designer from 2012 to 2014.

The information and findings presented in the thesis were gathered from various literature, internet sources and already existing case studies. The theoretical part of the thesis discusses etymology, analogy and general information about both entrepreneurship and freelancing and its place in today's business environment, while introducing the reader to the essential information behind the freelancer market, supported by the most important figures and statistics. The theoretical framework and statistics of the study heavily relies on secondary data.

The practical part was an essential step by step guide to instruct undergraduate students to an optimal freelancer career development, presented by the author, while giving critical and constructive feedback alongside the recommendations.

The results of the project indicated that freelancing was a valid alternative for undergraduate students on the field of business and IT technologies since it provides them with a unique freedom and independence alongside the international environment, variable professional skills and experience, which can be used further in their career.

It would be wise to study freelancing more extensively, to provide more cohesive data on the topic and to better promote the field for students, in the future, furthermore to create a fully illustrated guide.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Internet is the decisive technology of the information age. In the past 15 years it has opened up countless of new opportunities, created new, and revolutionized already existing industries, alongside having a groundbreaking effect in our society on a global level. This development and global proliferation of technology among developed and developing countries allowed the online freelance phenomenon and environment to rise.

With the founding of first online freelancer websites in the new millennium, both professional individuals, and companies started to notice the solutions, and embrace the new opportunities offered by the online freelancing scene. With the exponential growth of freelancing in the past years, it is having more relevancies on the global economical level, and it provides an interesting and diverse research topic for undergraduate students about its advantages and the present challenges from an entrepreneurial point of view.

2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Purpose

The theoretical purpose of the thesis was to introduce the freelancer phenomenon from an entrepreneurial perspective, furthermore to understand who freelancers really are, what their motivation behind freelancing is, where they are located, how they manage self-employment in general; and what specific challenges do they meet in a theoretical statistical manner. Furthermore to explore briefly different freelancing platforms, and understand the various statistics and numbers concerning the market

and economic issues behind them, alongside introducing the advantages, challenges and reasons behind becoming a freelancer as an undergraduate student.

2.2 Research questions and research objectives

Research questions for theoretical part

- What is the connection between Entrepreneurship and Freelancing?
- What is Online Freelancing?
- Who online freelancers really are?
- What are Freelancer Marketplaces?
- What are the advantages of Freelancing as an undergraduate Student?
- How to create a valuable practical guide for beginner freelancers?

Research questions for the practical guide part

- How to be an online Freelancer?
- How to decide if Freelancing is for you?
- How to start your career and develop step by step?
- What are the challenges of freelancing and how to deal with it?

The practical objective of the thesis was, after understanding the theoretical information behind freelancing is to provide essential guidelines for the reader in a consistent form to the thesis about, how to become a freelancer career in the framework of the freelancer marketplace; UpWork (Formerly oDesk) by following up an optimal step by step, career progression, while introducing small cases with different clients with the corresponding challenges and suggestions.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

In order to fulfill the purpose, and meet the goals of the project thesis, there was a need to design a, both logically and chronologically correct and research methodologically applicable conceptual framework. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) is a

visual representation of the thesis. It gives an insight to the project topics, reflecting their logical order, relevance and connection to one another.

The proposed framework starts with the concept and analogy Entrepreneurship, followed by its connection to Online Freelancing. Then it is describing, analyzing and further discussing with additional emphasis on background information, platforms and market statistics and facts. The research objective; the proposed freelancing guide, was created with a synergy from the mentioned theoretical background, the supportive guide writing tutorial and the authors own personal experiences. The framework was constantly developed during the research and writing stage, and reached its final form.

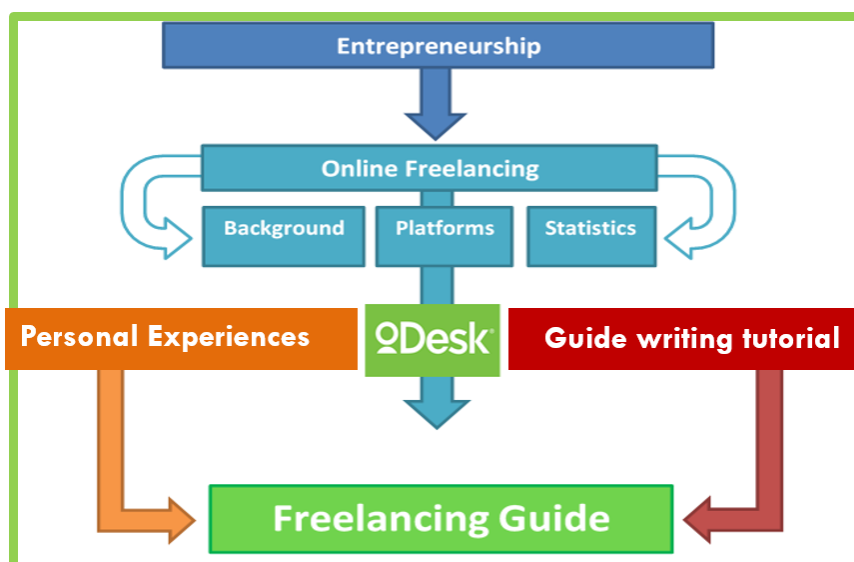


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

2.4 Limitations and boundaries

There were several limitations and boundaries which needed to be taken into considerations when researching a special topic like freelancing. Online Freelancing is considered to be a new and rapidly evolving phenomenon which makes the implementation of proper and academically correct literature and sources challenging. The latest available information and statistic are only available on various online sources, such as content-specific websites, journals, blogs, or shared on social-media by the freelancing-platforms, which reliability' is questionable. On the contrary the academical-

ly valid studies available in specific journals and books can be considered outdated. The issue is further discussed in 8.3, with the provided solution for this challenging task.

The statistics presented in the theoretical part under 5.5 and 5.7 are based directly on Ed Gandia's Freelance Industry Report 2012 and the Annual Impact Report 2014 supplied by Elance-oDesk. The present surveys and its research methodology, is not discussed in the thesis because it serves only as supplementary and secondary information for the reader.

The proposed practical guide part is reflecting the personal and subjective interpretation of author's own experiences based on the freelancer lifestyle, combined with the available theoretical sources and benchmarked materials. The document is not focusing on any specific freelancer field, but with the goal to provide an essential general guide for any field, since the basic principles are considered the same.

Throughout the thesis the reader might notice various freelancer platform names such as Elance, oDesk, Elance-oDesk and UpWork, being referred to both individually and collectively in statistics, figures and definitions. The reason behind this issue is, the changes happening during the writing process, behind these companies' status. Elance and oDesk used to be separate competing companies up until middle 2014, when they merged, and became Elance-oDesk, however both platform kept their websites and identity separated. In 2015 May, oDesk branch changed its name to UpWork coming up with a whole new corporal design and platform features, but the merged company was still referred as Elance-oDesk at the end of the thesis writing process. The organization-duo announced, that their future plan is to bring Elance, under the name of UpWork, thus uniting its freelancer and client communities under one global platform in the near future. Due to mentioned issue the project and its evaluation should be considered accordingly.

The creation of a standalone illustrated guide book, is a challenging task, and after deep consideration of the size, scope and timeline of the thesis project, the author decided to create a content wise fully researched, written, draft material integrated

into the project thesis. A draft material which can be turned into a fully functional psychological guide book in the future. Due to same limitations, financial considerations and issues about taxation are mentioned briefly, but without further discussion.

3 PROJECT REALIZATION

3.1 Defining the Project Thesis

A project thesis consists of two parts: the project, a designed professional activity which is executed individually by the student as a way of solving the research problem, and the report written about the corresponding project. The mentioned type of thesis is considerably appropriate for students in fields of business, social work, education, or public administration. (Website of New York University... 2010.)

This type of thesis can be suggested for students, being actively employed in their profession, while the same time being responsible for the creation of a practice or program. It is important that the project cannot simply propose the professional activity; the design for the proposed plan must be completed. (Website of New York University... 2010.)

Choosing Project Thesis as framework was the most logical and appropriate decision because, it gave the chance to the author to use the experiences gained during the two years spent as a freelancer, alongside, the proposed research-approach and the methods to gain latest information's, statistics and theoretical sources, thus creating a generally applicable representative online freelancer guide for students.

3.2 Personal Background

In 2012 June the author made a big decision, a decision which would have a significant effect of his personal, educational and work life in the upcoming years, least he know that time. While being employed at a company as an intern, he did receive the

expected amount of tasks, responsibilities but at the same time he still had a reasonable free time after the completion of these daily routine. That was the time when the author decided to use the leftover time for a greater good, for the future. The objective of his research at the time was to earn extra money while, gaining skills related and relevant to his studies and future career. After a short initial research he came across online freelancing and decided to set up an experimental project and become a freelancer.

3.3 Personal Freelancer Career as the Project

Since then in the past two and half year, the author has been working as an online freelancer, in the framework of freelancer platform; UpWork (formerly oDesk.) It is one of the biggest global job marketplaces with a series of tools targeted at businesses and individuals that intend to hire and manage remote workers.

During this period the author has been working with more than 50 clients from all over the world, from small and medium sized enterprises to private persons and agencies in different industries, created over 100 PREZI and PowerPoint based presentations, animated videos, other relevant marketing materials for business purposes, conferences, tutorials and meetings, and gained special experience, and knowledge on the field of marketing, graphic design, logistics and international business.

4 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

"Entrepreneurship is the journey of opportunity exploration and risk management to create value for profit and/or social good" (Bam 1984, 23).

4.1 Defining Entrepreneurship

Understanding context is crucial in order to define entrepreneurship. That is because the extent to which a particular entrepreneurial framework condition may present an opportunity or constraint, varies significantly from one context to another.

The words entrepreneurship is derived from the French entrepreneur, which means “to undertake” (Kuratko 2009, 4). When defining entrepreneurship as a concept there are several possibilities and point of view to start from. The concept evolved with history, alongside the development of human society’s and mean different concepts during the ages. In the Traditional view entrepreneurship is a form of self-employment, relying on the skills of the individual or the utilizing the skills of others in the form of a business. Academically “a person who undertakes to supply a good or service to the market for personal profit, investing personal capital in the business and taking on the risks associated with the investment. It said that the initiative of entrepreneur creates a society wealth and that governments therefore establish conditions in which they will thrive.” (Oxford Dictionary 2010, 232.)

Nowadays entrepreneurs have been involved in a wide range of activities, that there is a need for brooding out the definition. Today entrepreneurs can be considered innovators, who recognize and seize an opportunity and converts them into workable marketable ideas. (Kuratko 2009, 5.)

From other point entrepreneurship can be a dynamic process of vision, change and creation. Requiring the application of energy and passion toward the creation and implementation of new ideas. Essential ingredients willingness to calculate risk, in terms of time equity career ability to formulate. (Kuratko 2009, 7.)

4.2 Entrepreneurial qualities

According to the latest research there are no specific competences which all entrepreneurs share, but there are several characteristics that the successful entrepreneurs have (University of Illinois..., 2011). Many researchers have studied the subject in

the past decades, but there are no definitive answers. Following this lead, a wide range of competences can be seen as entrepreneurial and can be useful to entrepreneurs depending on the context. According to an independent study commissioned by the European Union; these competences can be gathered into 4 separate categories. (Website of T.I.K.C.I. 2011.)

1. Personal characteristics
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Critical and creative thinking skills
4. Practical skills

In order to have a better understanding of the subject, the following section summarizes without the exhaustive need some of the important and academically accepted characteristics in each category, with a brief description of examples.

1. Personal Characteristics

By examining a person's personal characteristics, values, and beliefs. Its easily identifiable if the person has an entrepreneur-istic mind and skill set. **Optimism** is considered as a true asset, which helps everyone, not just entrepreneurs to get through challenges and obstacles which are often encountered when finding an appropriate business model. **Vision** allows entrepreneurs to see where things can be improved, by being able to see the "big picture" and possibly creating a compelling vision of the future, while the same time inspiring team members or employees to engage with that particular vision. The **Desire for Control** shows if a person, enjoys being in charge and making decisions, furthermore, if is the individual motivated enough for it **Risk Tolerance** correlates how the person is the able to take risks, and make decisions when facts are uncertain, and what are the results of those decisions. **Resilience** can be considered another important asset so that how individuals coop with failures, and how do they act when things don't go as planned? Furthermore if are they able learn and grow from these mistakes and failures? (Website of T.I.K.C.I. 2011.)

2. Interpersonal Skills

As a successful entrepreneur, it is necessary have to work closely with other people – this is where it is critical to be able to build great relationships with the team, cus-

tomers, suppliers, shareholders, investors, and more. Some are more gifted and skilled in this area than others, but, fortunately, it's always possible learn and improve. The most important types of interpersonal skills include **Leadership and Motivation** affects how these individuals can lead and motivate others to follow them and deliver the vision to delegate work to others? To be a successful entrepreneur, having an effective, motivated team is indispensable. **Communication Skills** affects the general competency in all types of communication, the ability to communicate well, to sell the vision of the future to investors, potential clients, team members, and more. **Listening** is another interpersonal skill which is often forgotten but it is always important and crucial to hear what other people, fellow team members, and customers have to say by practicing active and empathetic listening. **Negotiation** are also essentials not only needed to negotiate keen prices, but to be able to resolve differences between people in a positive, mutually beneficial way. **Ethics** summarizes the treating of other people based on respect, integrity, fairness, and truthfulness. By leading and doing business ethically, it's much easier to build a happy committed team who will help to keep healthy relationships with clients, and suppliers.

(Website of T.I.K.C.I. 2011.)

3. Critical and Creative Thinking Skills

As an entrepreneur, the individual is needed to come up with fresh ideas, and make good decisions about opportunities and potential projects. Many people think that somebody is either born creative or not. However, creativity is a skill that can be developed overtime if the necessary time and effort is invested. **Creative Thinking** enables entrepreneurs to see situations from a variety of perspectives and come up with original ideas. There are several tools for creativity which can help the individual on several levels. **Problem Solving** is another non-replaceable asset determining the individual's capability of solving various problems and challenges. Tools such as Cause & Effect Analysis, the 5 Whys Technique, and CATWOE are just a couple among all the problem-solving tools that are available for entrepreneurs. **Recognizing Opportunities** and spotting new trends at the right time in order to take advantage on them can be considered another crucial skill. (Website of T.I.K.C.I. 2011.)

4. Practical skills

It includes all the practical skills and knowledge needed to produce goods or services effectively, and run a company. With regular **Goal Setting** and plan creation it is much easier for these individuals to carry out specific plans both in short and long-term. **Planning and Organizing** summarizes the talents, skills, and abilities necessary to achieve specific goals through the efficient and effective coordination of people, and forecasting possible outcomes. The highest level of **Decision Making** based on relevant information and consideration of potential consequences is a rare skill set which only the most experienced and confident professionals possess. **Entrepreneurial knowledge** means the understanding of the issues behind capital raising furthermore the amount of experimentation and hard work that may be needed to find a working business model. **Venture-specific knowledge** is an essential in order to make any type of business successful on the corresponding field. (Website of T.I.K.C.I. 2011.)

4.3 Connection with Freelancing

There are several common issues in freelancing and entrepreneurship. Freelancing can be considered as one of the easiest, fastest, and lowest cost ways for a person to start working for themselves. Some of the advantages include, the opportunity for flexible working time, unique freedom, the individual responsibility in financial decisions and budget, alongside the opportunity to network as a professional in that particular field. (Allabarton 2014.)

The differences between the two can be identified and measured in the amount of risk involved, favoring to become a freelancer. There are numerous ways to become an entrepreneur. Freelancing can be considered an alternative bridge between the two, providing the crucial experience on the way to become one. (Allabarton 2014.)

5 ONLINE FREELANCING

5.1 Defining Freelancing

According to Merriam-Webster, there are three definitions for the word, freelance:

- A mercenary, a soldier from the Medieval Times of Europe
- An individual acting independently without being bound or instructed by a specific organization
- An individual pursuing a profession without a long-term commitment to any employers

The second and third definitions are relevant for the thesis purposes but at the same time the first definition cannot be dismissed, since it transmits the original meaning and context of the word. (Website of Freelancing Guide 2012).

Sir Walter Scott (1819) used the term “freelance” the first time in his novel “Ivanhoe”. A lance is a one or two-handed melee weapon, but it also refers to a knight with a horse who is wielding it. “Free lances” were considered warriors, who were not in the service of any kings or nobles: they were “free” to work to their personal choosing. (Website of Freelancing Guide 2012.)

In the 1860s the word changed to a figurative noun and by 1903 it was also recognized as a verb in academic sources such as the Oxford English Dictionary. By now the term changed from a noun (a freelance) into an adjective (a freelance writer), to a verb (a writer who freelances) and into an adverb (he worked freelance), also to the noun “freelancer.” (Website of Merriam-Webster 2010.)

Freelancers nowadays can be defined as self-employed professionals often working in creative, managerial or technical fields, offering their services on various freelancer marketplaces while being connected through a computer or telecommunications system as the Internet. (Website of Freelancing Guide 2012.)

They can operate under various legal business forms, such as, sole traders, partners in unincorporated businesses or directors of their own limited companies. With other words Independent contractor could be the term used in the academic level of English. (Smallbone & Kitching 2012, 74-91.)

Freelancers generally work for various clients and the relationship between the client and the freelancer is often defined in a contract for services setting the terms. This is in contrast to regular employment, in which the employer/employee relationship is determined in a contract of services. (Tench 2002, 314; Parker 2007, 6.) Nowadays, the term freelancer merged with "online freelancer", or with other words; e-lancers, or independent contractors offering their services online on different fields and specialties.

5.2 Type of Freelancers

According to the results of an independent study commissioned by Freelancers Union & Elance-oDesk in 2014, freelancers can be divided into several subgroups by distinctive characteristics and factors. By examining the following groups it is possible to have a better understanding the diversity and its reasons among freelancers.

Independent Contractors represent 40% of the independent workforce. They can be considered "traditional" freelancers who don't have an employer. But instead they are doing full-time freelancing, as temporary, or supplemental in the framework of various projects. (Website of Elance-oDesk 2014.)

Moonlighters with 27% are usually professionals having a traditional full time job, but at the same time doing freelance work thus moonlighting. For example, a translator employed by a company, who also does projects for non-profits in the free time. (Website of Elance-oDesk 2014.)

Diversified workers are 18% of the independent workforce. They are people with multiple sources of income, while mixing traditional employment and freelance projects. As an example, a person who is working in as a bartender 25 hours per week

and subsidizing the rest of the income from doing freelance graphic design or sharing his flat with AirBnB. (Website of Elance-oDesk 2014.)

Temporary Workers with a 10% are individuals employed by single clients, temporarily in the framework of a project. For example, a marketing consultant working for freshly founded companies, startups, for a 2 months-long project. (Website of Elance-oDesk 2014.)

Freelance Business Owners are the smallest group, representing 5% of the workforce. They are the owners of small businesses, employing 1-5 employees, but at the same time considering themselves freelancers due to specific projects unrelated to their business. (Website of Elance-oDesk 2014.)

5.3 Qualities of a Freelancer

Qualities of freelancers are strictly correlated with the entrepreneurial qualities alongside the mind and skill set already discussed in section 4.2, however there are specific areas which require extra focus, such as time-management and areas which can be ignored, Team-Management due to the special solo nature of freelancing.

5.4 Fields of Freelancing

The fields of online freelancing is strictly, linked, to all the job fields, where the independent contractor, can work from distance, while being connected to the internet, on the computer or any other applicable device. The following non-exhaustive list represents possible freelancing fields; web design, graphic design, journalism, copywriting and editing, photography, publishing, event planning and management, proofreading, music, indexing, computer programming, website development, consulting, screenwriting, video editing, video production and translating. (Website of Elance-oDesk.com 2014.)

The infographic prepared by Elance-oDesk gives a proper insight the most popular freelancer areas from 2014. Design and Writer areas can be considered with their

20.4% and 18% the most popular among freelancers. The reason behind this can be found in the nature of the field itself. Both areas permit the contractor to work independently, in project-base flexible environment without the need of physical dependency. The presented percentages indirectly also represent the available jobs and possible competition of the freelancer job markets, where supply and demand plays an extremely important role.

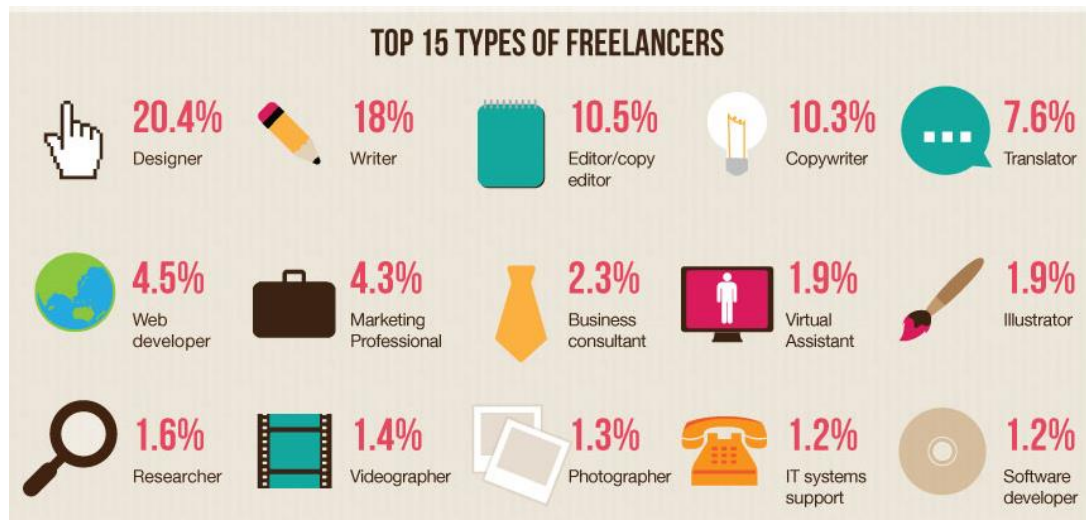


Figure 2. TOP 15 type of freelancers (Website of Elance 2014)

5.5 Essential Freelancing Statistics

In order to better understand who freelancers really are, what is their motivation behind freelancing is, where they are located, how they manage self-employment in general; and what specific challenges do they face, there was a need to find representative and comprehensive study on the subject. The following statistics are based on Ed Gandia's 2012 Freelancer Industry Report. It's based on surveyed 1,491 freelancers in more than 50 different fields and professions. (Ed Gandia 2012.)

Reasons behind Freelancing

Freelancers do not state as one single reason for freelancing. These experienced benefits are considerably different by gender, industry, and lifestyle. However due to the

boundaries of the thesis only statistics relevant to the practical study are shown and discussed. (Ed Gandia 2012.)

Freelancers can be considered as a passionate group. 28% of the respondents stated, that choosing the freelancing path was due to the need to have more freedom and flexibility in their schedule. For 23% it meant simply following their passion. 13% said that they always wanted to be their own boss. 14.4% said that the freelance career was not something they planned, but the results of unforeseen consequences. There is another 14% saying that, as a result of layoff and downsizing affected their decision to become freelancers. The smallest group with 7.4% said, they simply wanted to earn a supplemental income alongside their traditional job. (Ed Gandia 2012.)

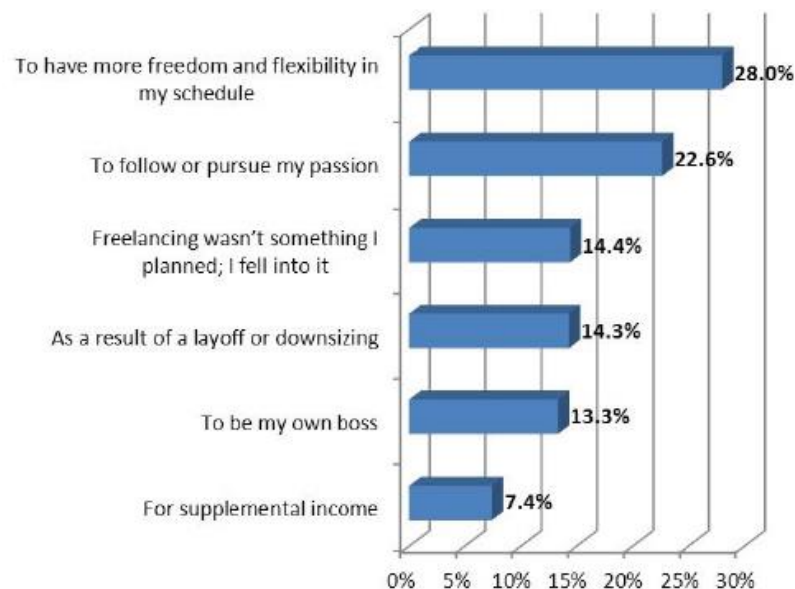


Figure 3. Reasons behind Freelancing (Ed Gandia 2012, 23)

One of the top reason behind freelancing among the respondents with a results of 25% was to having more flexibility in their schedule. The Other top benefits mentioned were the diversity in work with 15%, being your own boss with 14%, and the sole ability to be mobile, and being able to work from any location, alongside another 14% who said that the the ability to make their own decisions (9%). The mentioned top responses give a representative statistics on the values freelancers keep the most important. (Ed Gandia 2012.)

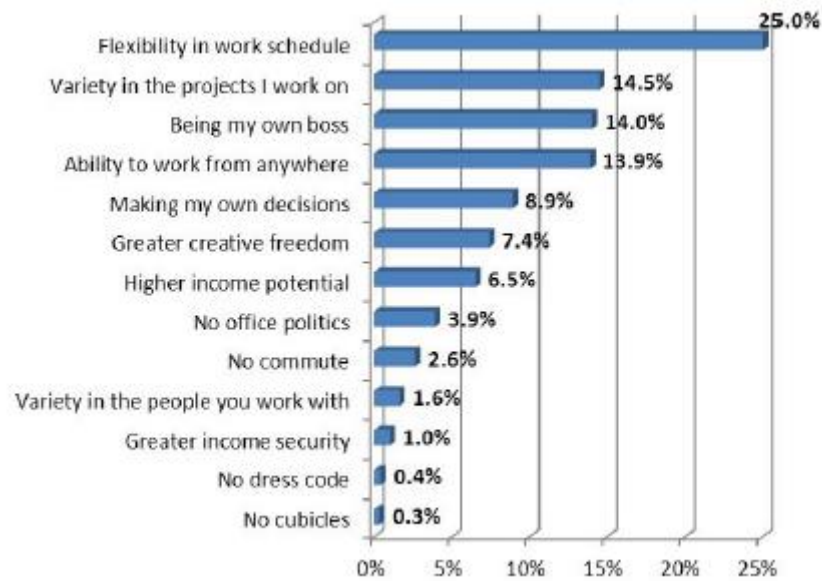


Figure 4. Benefits of Freelancing (Ed Gandia 2012, 23)

Most of the participants 78% of them are located in North America, 11% of them are living in Europe, only 5% are located in Asia and 3% of them are based in South America. Altogether, people from Central America, Africa, the, Oceania, Australia, Middle East and other regions represent only 3% of results. (Ed Gandia 2012)

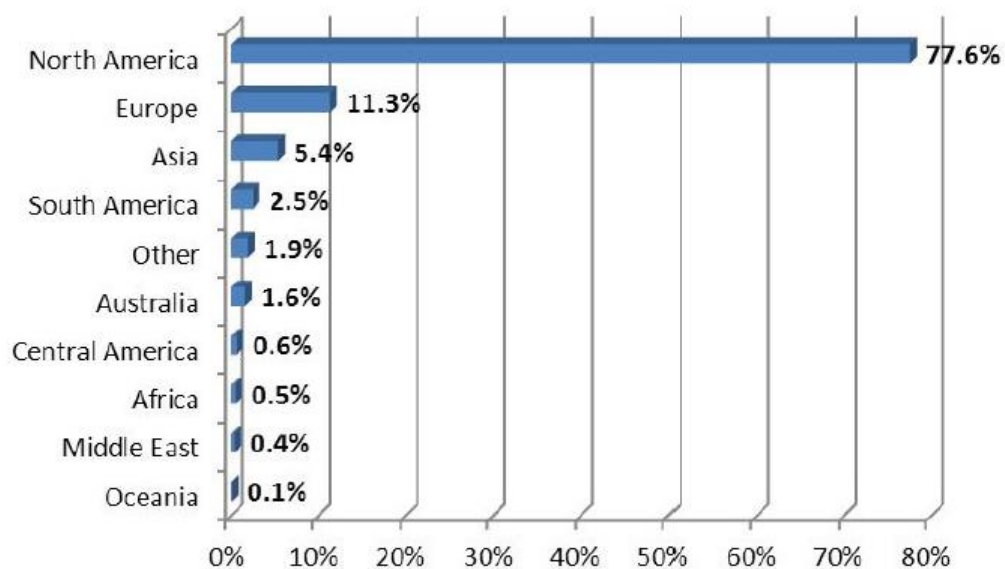


Figure 5. Location of freelancers (Ed Gandia 2012, 23)

Happier as a Freelancer? 90% of the freelancers stated that they are happier at the moment than they were previously when becoming self-employed. These results are

a clear indication about the general happiness among freelancers on a global trend. (Ed Gandia 2012.)

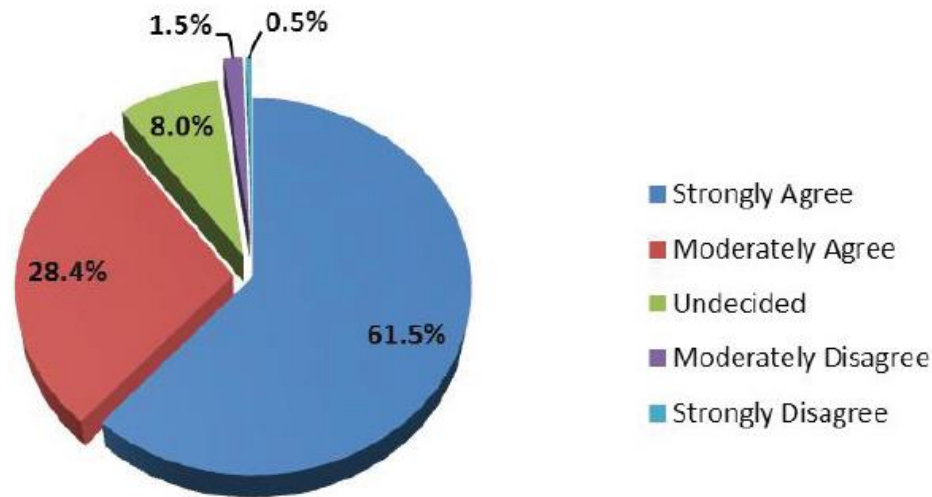


Figure 6. More Happy as Freelancer (Ed Gandia 2012, 23)

5.6 Freelance Platforms

Online freelance marketplaces are specific websites that connect, clients and freelancers and their services over the internet. The innovation and development of technology such as the electronic availability of jobs and broadband internet connections have increased the supply of remote jobs that can be taken over by freelancers. These marketplaces are the most used method for online freelancing. Service providers, or sellers, can create a profile where they include a description of their offered, examples of their work, in the framework of a portfolio and in most cases information about their rates. Buyers, or Clients register and complete a basic profile, they then post projects describing their requirements. Freelancers will then bid for the posted projects on a fixed price or hourly basis. There are several websites offering online outsourcing but in the thesis project only the largest and most relevant is discussed. (Thabassum 2013.)

Elance-oDesk can be considered the world’s largest online workplace, with over 2.7 million businesses and more than 9 million freelancers from over 180 countries with gross earnings of \$900M are connected to Elance and UpWork. ”As this increasingly connected and independent workforce goes online, talent—like software, shopping and communications before it—is shifting to the cloud. This shift is freeing professionals from set-time-and-place work, while also making it faster and convenient for businesses to hire. Elance-oDesk headquarter is located in Mountain View, California, with offices in San Francisco, California, and Oslo, Norway.” (Website of Elance-oDesk 2014.)

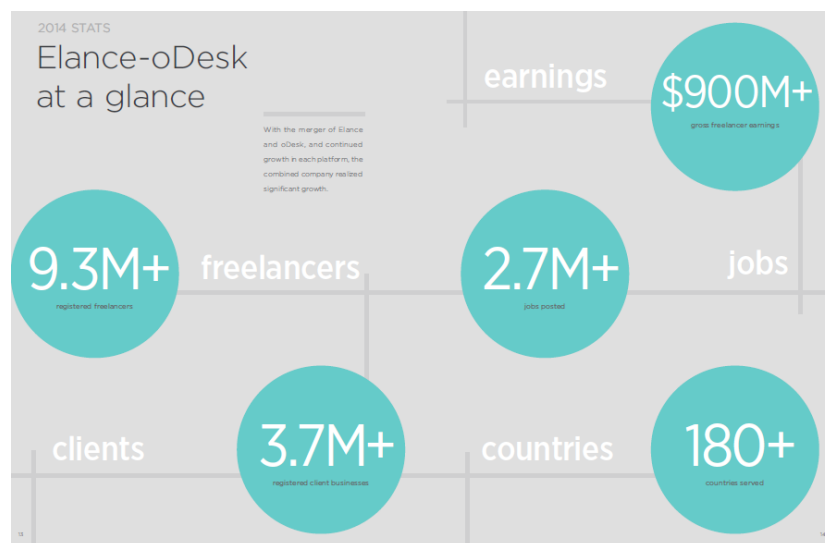


Figure 7. Elance-oDesk at a Glance (Annual Impact Report 2014 16.)

5.7 Freelance Market and Economic Trends

”Historically many firms have been using freelancers/contractors for years. Typically the media and publishing sectors for example. Part of the growth is now due to other sectors “getting it”, and realizing that they can use a “skills on demand” model to reduce full time expenditure of staff, and more importantly hire in skills on a short term basis that they wouldn’t be able to afford on a full time basis. One could almost now say that firms not using contractors are at a disadvantage over their competitors” (Chaplin 2014.)

From retro perspective the internet has opened up new freelance possibilities, increased the growth of available markets, and has contributed to increase of service

sectors in several economies on a global level. The rise started in 1999, with the founding of first online freelancer websites. Both clients and contractors from different fields started to notice, the possibilities, and opportunities and embraced new technologies.

Estimating the online freelancing market and economy size globally can be considered a challenging task due to several reasons. The market is shared between the biggest freelancer's platforms. These platforms often prepare statistics from their own framework, but that does not include statistics from their competitors thus making it impossible to have a unified global data. However by examining the provided facts from one of the biggest platform Elance-oDesk (UpWork), it is still possible to make globally representative, applicable conclusions. (Website of elance-odesk 2014.)

Countries by spend

The following countries can be broken down and categorized further according to their Human Development Index (HDI), which is a compound indicator that consists of gross domestic product, life expectancy, the rate of literacy, and many other statistics, furthermore the proliferation of freelancer market. Figure 8. Introduces the top 10 countries by spend from the 2nd quarter of 2014. The list is entirely represented by Highly Developed Countries, in the following order; the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Germany, France Netherlands, Israel and Singapore in this sequence.

The order also gives an insight to the proliferation and adaption of freelancer market in these countries. United States can be considered a pioneer, among the others, since it was the first country which embraced freelancing and its possibilities starting with 1999. Latest statistics state that there are currently an estimated 53 million Americans freelancing. It is approximately 34 percent of the total workforce, which can be considered an impressive number, yet researches have been neglecting the topic of freelancing (Smallbone & Kitching 2012, 74.) This adaptation was quickly followed by Australia and Canada due to the similar market and economic conditions.

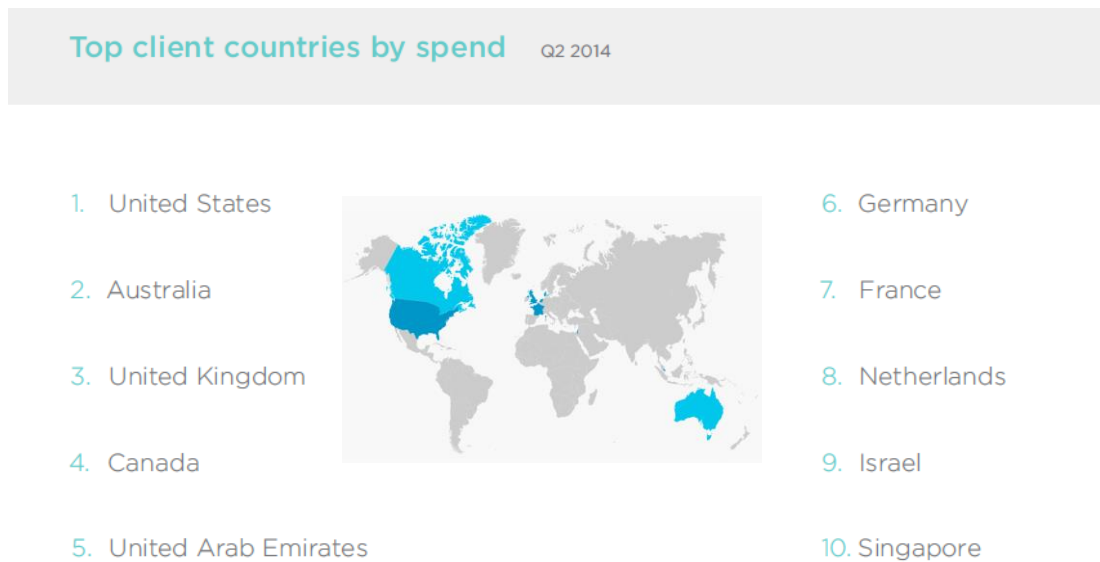


Figure 8. Top client countries by spend Q2 2014 (Annual Impact Report 2014, 16)

The growth of freelancers in Europe is visible only since 2004. However these numbers in 2013 have increased from 6.2 million people by 45% to 8.9 million. This increasing trend turned freelancers into the fastest growing group in the European Union's workforce market. Freelancers nowadays represent an important segment of the labor market generally, making up 25% of people employed in scientific, technical and other professional fields, furthermore with 22% in entertainment and arts. (Allison 2014).

Saudi Arabia with high economic resources and Singapore with a unique entrepreneurial environment, are good examples for the variety of markets in which freelancing can develop further and thrive.

Countries by earnings

Figure 9. introduces the top10 Countries with highest earnings from 2nd quarter of 2014. Compared to the previous figure this one shows particularly, a more diverse picture about freelancer market situation around the world. The list is led by India followed by the United States, Philippines, Ukraine, Pakistan, Russia, Bangladesh, Canada, United Kingdom and ending with China. (Website of Elance-oDesk 2014.)

7 out of 10 countries on the list can be considered developing countries (India, Pakistan, Philippines) or Semi-Developed countries (Ukraine, Russia). The reason behind this can be found in the size of population, increasing level of education, development of IT infrastructure, and general proliferation of technology. People in these countries recognized, that freelancing gives them an opportunity to earn considerably a much higher amount of income, compared to the standards in their countries. Often they are also able to provide the same quality skills and services on a much lower rate making it attractive for clients from Figure 8. to hire them. (Website of elance-odesk 2014.)

The United States holds still the 2nd place on the list, due to the reasons already explained in the previous sections, alongside Canada and the United Kingdom.



Figure 9. Freelancer countries with the highest earnings Q2 2014
(Annual Impact Report 2014 16.)

Fastest Growing Client Countries

Figure 10. lists the fastest-growing client countries between 2012 and 2014 and represents a much more balanced ratio between developed and developing countries. The group of Finland, France, Sweden, Malta, and Germany is a definite proof of Europe's delayed adaptation cycle to the freelancer markets. These European developed countries tend to have the resources and in the past years they realized the demand for these freelancer services. The increasing trend among developing (China, Mexico, Brazil,) and semi-developed client countries (Russia, Romania) is correlated

with the previous trends and facts of the increasing number of freelancers. According to a recent study 20-25% of all freelancers used at least once their freelancing platform, as a client (Allison 2014).

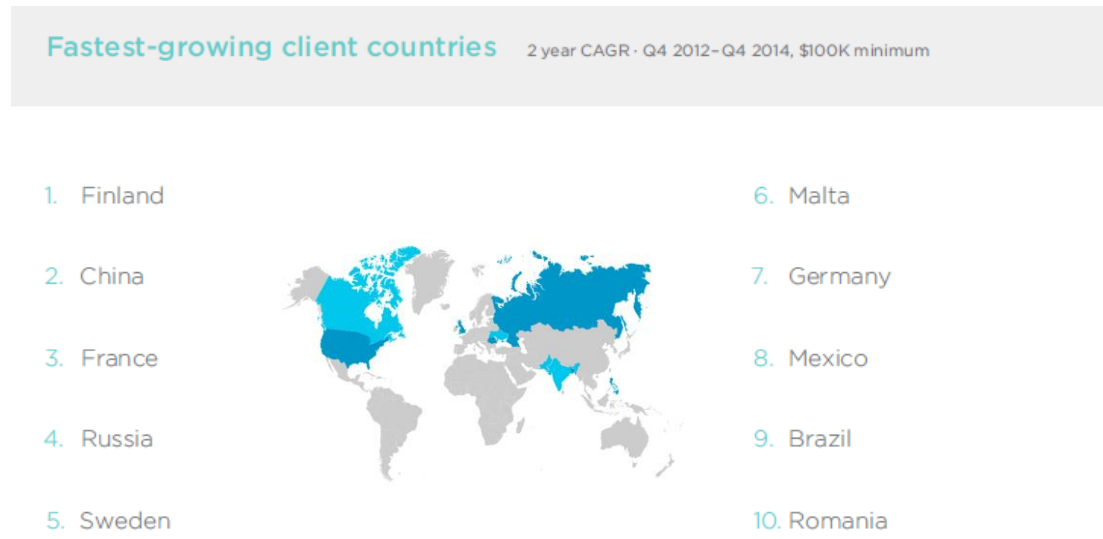


Figure 10. Fastest-growing client countries 2 year CAGR · Q4 2012 – Q4 2014, \$100K minimum (Annual Impact Report 2014 16.)

Fastest Growing Freelancer Countries

Figure 11. summarizes the Fastest-Growing freelancer countries between 2012 and 2014. Without repeating the same trends, reasons, and factors, the countries can be divided once again in a 3:7 ratio. Norway, Japan and Slovakia are serving as an example, that freelancing as a service provider can be a valid and attractive alternative in developed countries as well. From the other perspective Montenegro, Madagascar, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile and Costa Rica confirms, effects of freelancing furthermore that these developed countries have the affinity and the workforce to satisfy global demands.

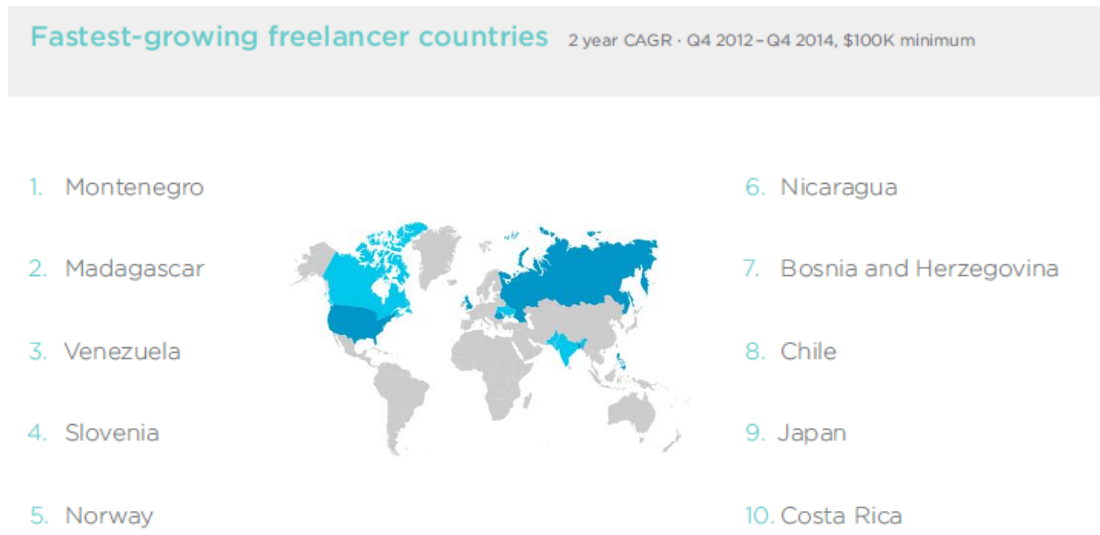


Figure 11. Fastest-growing freelancer countries 2 year CAGR · Q4 2012 – Q4 2014, \$100K minimum (Annual Impact Report 2014 16.)

Future Trends

There are several reasons why freelancing is growing. The main reason is the proliferation of technology. Internet has revolutionized the way people find and access work. Everything is connected, which makes it easier for people to work remotely, and for clients to hire these freelancing individuals with the required skill set. Another reason is global economic crisis affected several countries and their economies. As results many people became unemployed and it also forced organizations to cut down on costs and find a cheaper, alternative option of paying someone on a project basis. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

Considering the current trends, becoming a freelancer will be more and more popular all around the world for several reasons. This number is expected to reach up to 50 percent by 2020 in the U.S alone. With continuous growing number of freelancers, it can expected that companies will embrace the growth, and more importantly, adjust and prepare for this increase in on-demand labor. Between trying to attract the right freelance talent and putting the right systems in place. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

1. SMEs will hire more freelancers.

Recent statistics by Elance says that the number of the businesses from the United Kingdom, that hired online freelancers from various platforms increased by 46% in 2013. A corresponding study also states that 90% of businesses that use freelancing platforms at the moment believe that online outsourcing will soon become a much more common practice and accepted as a global trend. So it can be definitely said that small and medium sized enterprises will hire independent workers more than ever before. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

2. Global Companies will use the extended workforce

Following the previous trends not only SME's but Fortune 100 companies will look for the services offered by freelancers because alongside high quality services offered by them, there are great benefits which makes it possible to cut costs and becoming more financially efficient,. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

3. More professionals are expected to take on freelance projects

More professional people can be expected to discover the benefits offered by the freelancer environment. As these benefits become clearer and discovered on the work labor market simply the amount of moonlighters will increase alongside the professionals with a traditional full time job, also doing additional freelance work projects. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

5. More positive attitude towards freelancing

The expansion and transformation of freelance global economy is definitely more than an economic change. It includes cultural and social changes, which can be also considered as the alternative industrial revolution of the 21st century. Revolutionizing the way people live and work. But as an unknown and new phenomenon, freelancing is marked often or dismissed as chance for avoiding tax and exploiting vulnerable workers, according to the 2011 report by the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Freelance Sector. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

5. More online services and tools created for freelancers

As the number of freelancers grows, most likely there will be a corresponding trend in the availability of services and tools targeting freelancing to tackle problems, chal-

lenges, such as new more specified online job marketplaces, accounting applications and project management tools. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

5.8 Perspective of Undergraduates and Young Professionals

“Today’s college graduates interested in freelancing should use all available means to land their first gigs. In addition to leveraging friends, family and professors, recent grads also have access to a wide variety of online freelancer marketplaces where they can advertise their skills and find all sorts of work, ranging from computer-based jobs like Web developing to offline work like IT field services.” (Cannone 2015.)

With the popularization of freelancing and freelancer lifestyle more and more people turn to this alternative. Many among them are university students or young freshly graduated professionals. Becoming a freelancer as an undergraduate student yields numerous of advantages both in short-and long term perspectives, especially for business related students, as it has been mentioned in 4.3. This statement had been confirmed in entrepreneurial context.

When starting out a career, it is highly suggested to try the freelance route if available first. It gives the chance to the student to get the general feeling for the chosen field of expertise while at the same time it helps to build up experience and a network. Once this initial gain of experience finished it can be reconsidered if starting a business in that particular field is still a viable and worthwhile option. This method is simply helps the individuals to reduce risks, costs of starting up an own business, building up contacts, gaining valuable experience, and learning about themselves, their product alongside the competitors and clients. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

The increasing trend of freelancing already reached students and young professionals. A report on Generation Y and Online Freelancing prepared in February 2014 says that freelancing is now seen as a highly attractive and beneficial career option by 87% of students with corresponding degrees, which is a clear indication that stu-

dents all around the world already started to notice the various benefits offered by freelancing. (Website of Holvi 2014.)

6 ADDITIONAL CONCEPTS

The following sections contains supportive theoretical concepts, which will be mentioned but not explained in the practical part, so it is recommended to be familiar with in order to use the upcoming practical guide the optimal way. The mentioned concepts summarize the most important tools for personality self-assessment, to determine variable skills, traits, and professional orientation of people.

6.1 SWOT analysis and MBTI types

SWOT analysis, is as a business tool devised first in the 1960s. It stands for "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats," and conducting an analysis of those factors will the freelancers know more about where their talents lie and uncover opportunities for work they may never knew existed.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Figure 12. SWOT

“The Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment is a psychometric questionnaire designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. The assessment has helped millions of people worldwide gain insights about themselves and how they interact with others—and improve how they communicate, learn, and work. It provides a powerful framework for building better relationships, driving positive change, harnessing innovation, and achieving excellence. The MBTI assessment makes Carl Jung's theory of psychological type both understandable and highly practical by helping individuals identify their preferences in four areas.” (Website of CCP 2009.)

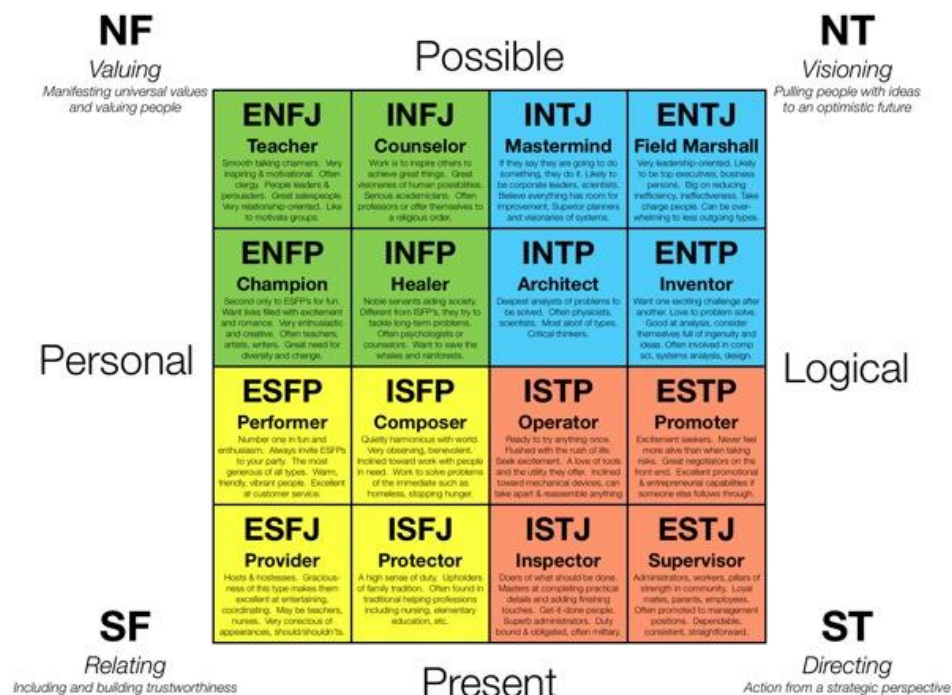


Figure 13. MBTI Types (Website of Virtual Project Consulting 2010.)

7 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF WRITING A GUIDE

There are several questions that need to be answered by the future, prior to writing a guide on how to do something. Is her or his knowledge extensive enough in the subject to explain it in simple method, and can he or she write a simple and short set of instructions based on that particular explanation? The objectives of any information or instruction writing project are to motivate the end user to read, understand, apply and remember the information. (Tonge R. 2001) If these objectives are to be achieved, three fundamental rules must be applied throughout the writing process;

- Write it for the end-user;
- Keep it Simple;
- Keep it Concise;

These three rules comprise the foundation of good, clear writing and the effective transfer of information from writer to reader. Following these rules is considered essential during any writing project, whether it involves just one writer or a collaborative effort. (Tonge R. 2001) A well designed training manual, that is kept up to date, can become a valuable source of information to the end user. An effective manual: Is easy to read and has easy to follow instructions;

- Has an attractive design;
- Uses illustrations to enhance understanding;
- Can be used for future reference;

Further important consideration when designing a manual:

- Content – topics, tasks, procedures and other information arranged in a logical sequence and broken down into small units;
- Audience – their reading skills, previous work experience;
- How the manual is to be used in the future for educational purpose

Avoiding jargon is suggested, unless it has been defined before-hand otherwise. Usage of the active voice is suggested alongside the consistency in tone and style of

writing. Figure 15 furthermore describes the optimal, and recommended planning process of a general guide. (Tonge 2001.)

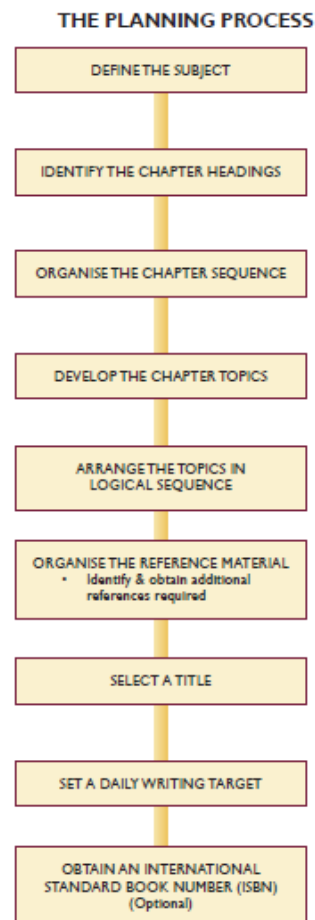


Figure 15. Planning process of a guide (Tonge 2001)

8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

”The purpose of research is to inform action. Thus, the study should seek to contextualize its findings within the larger body of research. Research must always be high quality in order to produce knowledge” (Website of Unite For Sight Org. 2011.)

In research methodology there are numerous ways to take when researching subjects in both social and business sciences. However choosing and identifying the most appropriate and reliable methods in the beginning yielded as a notable challenge in the project. There was a need for extensive study of various approaches, and strategies.

8.1 Research Approach

Many practically oriented business themed researches lack the explicit statement of approach and philosophical viewpoint of the study. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 10-24.) Following this lead, the project thesis' philosophical viewpoint can be identified as social constructionism, because the observer was part of what was being observed, the explanations aim was to increase the general understanding of the situation and the research progressed through rich data gathering which the ideas were induced from. (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson 2002, 29.)

8.2 Research Design

There are three most common types of research designs: Exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (causal). The research design chosen for this project is explanatory with some extensive features of descriptive studies. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003, 96.)

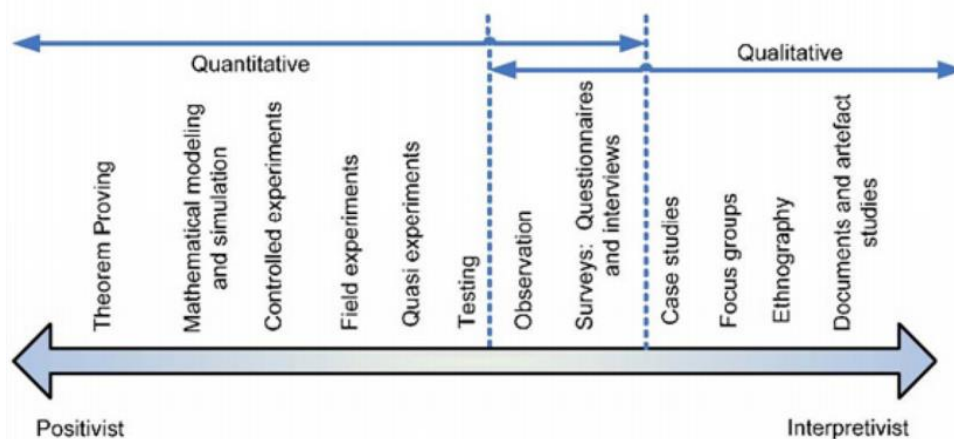


Figure 14. Research Methods/Strategies (De Villiers 2005)

8.3 Applied Research Methods

A research can be based on either quantitative or qualitative data, or on a combination of both. Due to the specific nature of the project thesis, only qualitative research

methods such as documentary analysis, field research alongside observations and an alternative type of benchmarking was used.

Documentary Analysis

Extensive usage of Documentary analysis was used during the project which involves obtaining secondary data from existing documents without having to question people through interview, questionnaires or observe their behavior. They can be items written or produced on paper, such as newspaper articles, books or items in other media can also be used in documentary analysis, including websites, online journals, publications, and blogs. However there is a need for clarifying that the reliability of these sources is widely debated, and every author's own responsibility is to search, filter and choose the appropriate ones for the corresponding project. (Trochim, William, & James 2008.)

Field Research and Observation

Field research can be considered either a broad approach to qualitative research or a method of gathering qualitative data. The essential idea is that the researcher goes "into the field" (as the author did during the timeframe spent as a freelancer) to observe the phenomenon in its natural state and situation. As such, it is probably most related to the method of participant observation. During the timeframe author took extensive field notes which were subsequently analyzed in a variety of ways. (Trochim, William, & James 2008.)

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is originally a tool for comparative analysis of objects such as companies, services, processes, systems, documents, algorithms, in a real-life setting or in controlled environments. Usually comparison to a fixed reference value which is the benchmark. In the project benchmarking was used as a supporting research method, in the theoretical part with the sole purpose *to identify* and *use* the characteristics of *already existing* reliable guides and tutorials for the sake of the project's own guide.

8.4 Research method distribution and literature review

The theoretical part of the project is based on secondary data, such as an already existing studies, statistic and online sources, gathered by the author alongside the extensive research of various concepts and the corresponding practical analysis of them. The theoretical framework and statistics of the study, heavily relies on Ed Gandia's Freelance Industry Report done in 2012 furthermore on D. Osnowitz book called: Freelancing Expertise and the Website of FreelancingGuide.net. The basic principles of entrepreneurship and the corresponding topics are based on Saras D. Sarasvathy's book: Effectuation: Elements of Entrepreneurial Expertise, and Donald F. Kuratko's Entrepreneurship: Theory, Process, and Practice. The framework under 8.0 is based on "How To Write Training manuals" by Rob Tonge 2001.

The empirical part is based on the findings and experiences of the author gained, during the specified timeframe alongside the official manual by UpWork (formerly oDesk) , and other relevant, reliable sources such as , the Brilliant Freelancer by author L. Kendall and Go Freelance by FreelanceAdvisor.co.uk.

9 PRACTICAL GUIDE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Preface

The following material represents the proposed content of the practical guide designated to instruct undergraduate students from arbitrary fields, on the subject on "How to become an Online Freelancer? The guide was assembled by Janos Novits, student of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in the degree program of International Business and Marketing Logistics 2015. The draft material is meant to be used alongside the other parts of the thesis and the official guide prepared by UpWork, and it holds a more casual, instructing personal language style. The content is fully-researched and written, and can be turned into a practically functioning guide by converting it to the required layout and form in the future.

9.2 Preparation

Preparing for your freelancer career as an undergraduate student is a big decision, a decision which can be influenced by many environmental and personal factors. Becoming a freelancer may sound nice and easy, but at the same time it holds many challenges. One of the most important tasks is to ask yourself. “Why do I want to become a freelancer?” Some motivations are more positive than others, good motivations include; as a student you want to;

- Improve on your prospects
- Pursue your own ideas
- Be your own boss
- Do the kind of work you love
- Earn experience in your field
- Do part time flexible work next to your studies

Bad motivations include;

- You just want to earn more money
- You dislike your current boss
- You are fed up for being punished for poor time-keeping in your current job
- You just would like to work less
- You have no motivation
- Freelancing sounds cool

One of the key elements in almost any stage of your life is self-knowledge. It is true in the context of freelancing as well. If you were asked, what you are good and bad at you might not be able to answer it definitively right away. But if you fail to recognize and promote your strengths in a long-term, how do you expect that others will recognize your qualities? Nevertheless you are also in danger of losing many opportunities in life. (Bown 2009.)

An effective way to increase your self-knowledge is to carry out various Self-assessment tests and analysis. These tools will help you in a long-term and highly suggested to repeat them from time to time to identify the possible changes. The sug-

gested tools at the beginning of your freelancer are career are; the SWOT analysis and MBTI personality test. If you are a student of business or psychology it is definitive that you heard at least about one of them.

With the help of SWOT analysis you will be able to identify your Strengths and Weaknesses and then relate them the Opportunities and Threats in your environment. It is a simple but extremely helpful tool and one that can be used in various situations. The following illustration shows the results the authors own SWOT analysis at the beginning of his own freelancer career, however it need to be clarified that this figure already includes results, from a basic market research, about environmental factors, which are not relevant at this stage of your progress, but in a later chapter will be discussed.

		Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieving the objective
Personal origin (skills, traits,)	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT skills • Designer skill • Business Related Skills • Language skill • Good motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of experience • Lack of commitment in long term projects • Tendency to be cerless
	Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • booming freelancer market • demand for prezi presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high competition
Freelancer Market (attributes of the environment)			

Figure 16. SWOT analysis of Janos Novits as in 2012

With the help of previously mentioned MBTI assessment you will be able to measure psychological preferences in, how you perceive the world furthermore how do you make decisions in certain situations. Take the results of the survey only as secondary supportive information, and a confirmation to your previously set goals and

orientation. Tests from various sources can be found online, which' methodology and reliability is questionable so it is highly suggested to take tests only from validated sources such as the official "The Myers & Briggs Foundation". The following description summarizes the most important characteristics of an ENFP type personality, which the author can be identified with.

"The best areas for ENFP type people are the ones that allow them to push boundaries every day. They don't enjoy structure at all and hate being told what to do – especially if those orders don't make much sense to them. Working as a freelancer or sole proprietor can be seen highly popular and beneficial for many ENFPs. Working on one's own allows this personality type to set their own hours, work at their own pace, and report to no one but themselves." (Website of Advise America 2014.)

Once you identified your skills, and your personality s affinity for freelancing it's time to move to the next stage, choosing the freelancer platform, and field of work, you will try your luck in.

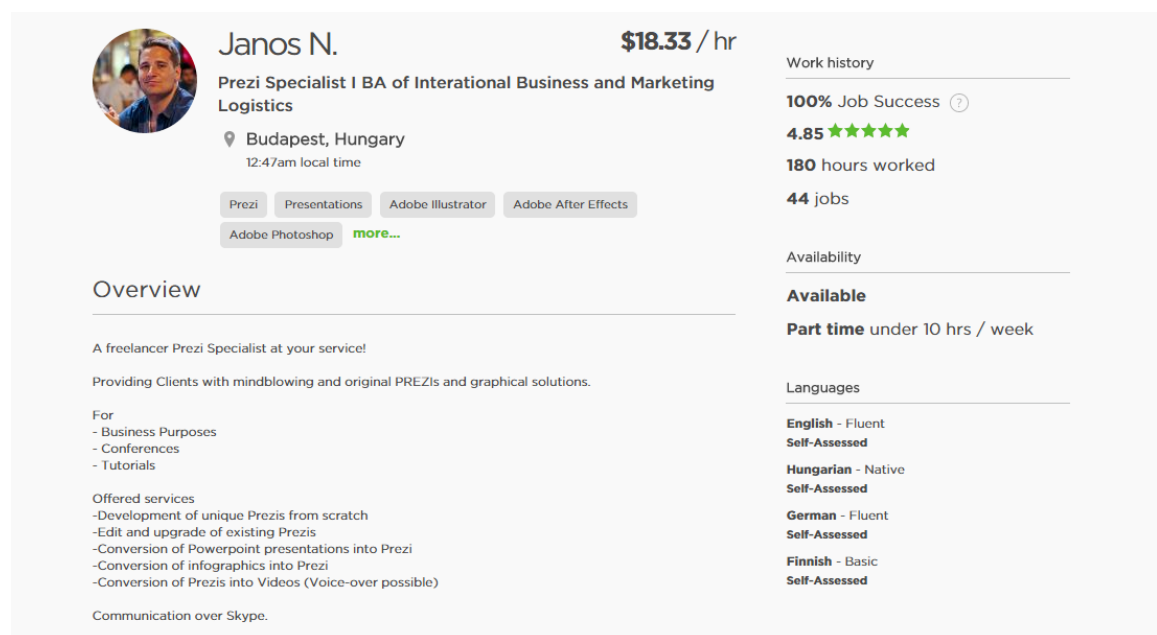
9.3 Choose Platform

Finding the most suitable platform is an extremely important task, since it will have countless of short and long-term effects, in almost all the aspects of your career. For every industry there are websites and platforms that unite freelancers with employers. Search for the ones that are relevant to your field of expertise. It is definitely worth to conduct your own platform research. However for the best freelancing experience, it is highly suggested to choose either UpWork (formerly oDesk) or Elance. Both of these two platforms are owned by the same company but according to their latest plan in 2015, Elance will be brought under the framework of UpWork. Due to this reason it is much more beneficial for your career, to choose and become familiar with the system and features offered by UpWork. (Leif 2011.)

9.4 Set up-Profile

Once you chosen the appropriate platform (UpWork.com) it is time to get familiar with the website, sign up, create your profile and set up your payment options. Up-Work is famous for its user friendly interface and clear directions and also it has a great manual, which will help you through the most important processes, website features and functions.

Successful profiles are complete, accurate, and paint a compelling picture of your skills, services and accomplishments. Your profile is the best opportunity to advertise your freelance business to potential clients, and you can complete it however you think best however the next couple of guidelines will help you how to make a great first impression.



Janos N. **\$18.33 / hr**

Prezi Specialist | BA of Interational Business and Marketing Logistics

Budapest, Hungary
12:47am local time

Prezi Presentations Adobe Illustrator Adobe After Effects
Adobe Photoshop [more...](#)

Work history

100% Job Success ?

4.85 ★★★★★

180 hours worked

44 jobs

Availability

Available

Part time under 10 hrs / week

Languages

English - Fluent
Self-Assessed

Hungarian - Native
Self-Assessed

German - Fluent
Self-Assessed

Finnish - Basic
Self-Assessed

Overview

A freelancer Prezi Specialist at your service!

Providing Clients with mindblowing and original PREZIs and graphical solutions.

For

- Business Purposes
- Conferences
- Tutorials

Offered services

- Development of unique Prezis from scratch
- Edit and upgrade of existing Prezis
- Conversion of Powerpoint presentations into Prezi
- Conversion of infographics into Prezi
- Conversion of Prezis into Videos (Voice-over possible)

Communication over Skype.

Figure 17. UpWork profile of Janos Novits (Header)

A great profile has a professional, preferably a headshot image of yourself, with a friendly expression and a plain background transmitting a business casual attire. Give Accurate title, which reflects your personal experience, indicates the preferred jobs, but at the same time it is still short and impactful. Focus on picking out, 3-5 core skills, which will be visible on the top of your account. In the overview section, write

a couple of basic but on the point sentences about yourself, and your professional background, which makes it easier for the client to get to know you.

The content under Work History and Feedback, alongside the Portfolio will be updated regularly throughout your career. Clients will be able to see your earlier projects, and the feedback given by your previous clients. This is one of the core features of UpWork, making sure, you as a freelancer supply the best possible service for your clients. A regularly updated Portfolio will make your profile even more attractive for future clients. Additionally you can add your most recent education alongside other accomplishments, professional certifications, licenses, special recognition or awards.

Work History and Feedback (42) Highest rated ▾

Promo video

"My first contract with an Odesk freelancer and I was fortunate to have found Janos. I needed a Prezi genius and Janos delivered. Great communication, excellent english skills, and amazing work. Janos exceeded my expectations in every way. Would highly recommend Janos."

★★★★★ 5.00

\$222.22 earned

Fixed Price

Oct 2013 - Dec 2013

Awesome Prezi Presentation Design needed

"I did enjoy working with Janos. I'm certain we will have more work for him sometime in the future."

★★★★★ 5.00


12 hours

\$17.78 /hr


\$204.47 earned

Sep 2013 - Apr 2015

Portfolio (19) Filter by category ▾



TaxiTastic small Ad



Prezi for TRISCO

Figure 19. Work History, Feedback and Portfolio

9.5 First Contract and early challenges

Landing your first contract on UpWork might be challenging. This is due to the previously mentioned feedback system. Clients are much more likely to hire somebody with the relevant feedback and experience than somebody with a freshly registered profile, which is completely understandable. At this stage, there is not much you can do, but to start look for entry level jobs. These entry level jobs involves, usually small manual tasks (mainly) not relevant to your expertise, such as filling out questionnaires, validating photos, locations, basic translations, proofreading etc. Many “wannabe” freelancers get stuck in this stage due to frustration, and lack of positive feedback. This can be considered one of the earliest, but biggest challenge, which can be overcome, with a bit of luck and proper time investment. Once you completed a couple of small entry level jobs and received your 4-5 star review, you can start looking for contracts relevant to your skills and expertise.

9.6 Setting Rates

Another critical questions to answer is; how much are you going to charge? What is the appropriate rate for someone like you at the beginning of the freelancer career? The easiest thing to do is to check your competitors. Simply get an idea of what people are charging, and charge something similar. But since you are just starting out, and don't have years of experience, it is highly suggested to charge at the lower end of the spectrum. Increase your rates as your experience, skills and knowledge grows. (Leif 2011.)

On Upwork there are two types of projects you can work on with your clients. On hourly contracts, you are paid by hour, making this a preferred option for many Freelancers when a project requires flexibility. Projects that can work well in an hourly format include Technical Support and Accounting Advisors.

On fixed-price contracts, you're paid a final cost for a project deliverable, or set of deliverables. This option can be ideal when the deliverable or deliverables are more

clearly defined. Examples of projects well suited for fixed-price format include Web Design and Mobile App Development or Graphic Design.

9.7 Project management techniques and necessary tools

Managing your projects is one of the biggest task of working online. This means, dealing with multiple jobs and deadlines, all while communicating with your clients and doing great work. This can be tricky sometimes, but with the right tools and techniques you can be your own best manager, set expectations carefully, and resolve issues quickly. But remember no project is perfect, so being proactive and honest serves you best when problems arise. There are several techniques and targeting freelancers, some of them are better for specific types of projects than others. It is highly suggested to make your own research, however the couple of next examples can be used universally.

The Waterfall Method

It can be considered one of the most traditional project management methods. Waterfall method is often the most preferred methodology for many freelancers, because it helps to define the scope already from the beginning of the project. The steps are completed in a logical order, and before progressing to the next one, the previous must be completed. Clients tend to prefer this method for design related projects, because it allows to show them the scope, timeline, and possible costs before the beginning of the project. However, the waterfall method often doesn't take possible setbacks and challenges into considerations which could disorientate you from the planned timeline. (MacDonald 2013.)

Staying Organized

Organization is the key to all the successfully managed projects. Before beginning there is a need for a basic background research on your client, which helps you to meet their general expectations, and the project itself. This small background research helps you to create a draft timeline and budget, which can be used in any methodology. Online project management services and tools can be extremely useful, to manage all of the possible issues in your project. Document your project every

step of the way, so that you can revise and optimize procedures in the future. Proper documentations of your actions will help you stay on track during these project. (MacDonald 2013.)

Useful Project Management tools for freelancers:

- BaseCamp
- Trello
- Focus Booster
- Solo

9.8 Customer service and satisfaction

Customer Service and satisfaction are correlating issues which need to be taken extremely seriously. Due to lack of personal contact, communicating clearly with your clients, replying as soon as possible is important and make you a valuable asset. It can be useful to establish a client communication plan that details how often you'll need to report on progress. Take responsibility for doing great work and delivering it on time. You can communicate with your client through the message center offered by Up Work, or email, Skype or any other preferred method, but choose only one method and stick to it to avoid confusion. (Leif 2011.)

9.9 Time-Management

There is no one perfect method to master time management. Each situation is different and can be handled differently by each person. Fortunately, there are several basic ideas behind time management which can be applied to any situation, whether you are a freelancer pursuing your first client, or an experienced freelancer with plenty of work. There is only one good reason to take control of your time and manage it to best advantage: you want to get things done and make work. (Brian 2011.)

A. Adjust your attitude early

One of the easiest ways to change is to make a list of the benefits you will receive if you start managing your time more efficiently. Don't make the mistake of thinking

that you have to create a list with amazing advantages. After all, it is the day to day tasks that usually give freelancers the most Satisfaction anyway. (Brian 2011.)

B. Start Small

It's hard to break old habits. That's why it's important to start well your freelancer career. That's what poor time management is, nothing more than a bad habit. As with many habits, you have to start with small changes if you want to succeed over the long term. (Brian 2011.)

B. Reward Yourself

Making steps to improve and finding out how to deal with your time is something essential and personal. Without a doubt, the way that you begin deal with time consistently for an entire week may not appear like much too any other individual, but rather that is not the point. The fact of the matter is you made a positive step that set you back accountable for a piece of your life and you are presently overseeing it appropriately. (Brian 2011.)

D. Expect Delays and Setbacks

Even the most professional time managers can't always manage this issue. As you begin the process of learning how to do a better job with your time, you will overlook situations, encounter circumstances, or simply over commit yourself, which will temporarily stop you from getting things done. (Brian 2011.)

E. Dealing with Distractions

Once you've created your to-do list, you need to think about what you're going to do and when. Schedule tasks in your project management apps. If you can resist the distractions of home or the internet, try working in 5 or 10 minute time-bursts. (Brian 2011.)

You can further reduce distractions by

- Switching off telephones
- Turning off Google Chat/Skype/Twitter applications
- Turning off your email

- Turning off the Internet completely (unless you need it in your project)

9.10 Additional recommendations

Always Back-up your data and files

With the ever increasing computerization, there is always a chance of losing data. Getting into a good backup habit now might save you a major frustration in future. Online storage such as various cloud services offers versatile and easy way to access your data from any PC – they are also a perfect protection against fire and theft. Leif Kendall (2011) is suggesting the following cloud services:

- DropBox
- GoogleDrive

Boredom

Although freelancing can be considered one of the least boring occupational fields, it is still very likely that you will get bored or frustrated in some of your projects or contracts. A good solution to counter this is varying your work setting. Try working from a different part of your house, or get mobile! Leave the house and work wherever you can. If one particular task is boring you, try leaving it alone for a while. Get up and go for a walk. Go see a film. Stop being bored. Life is too short. (Leif 2011)

Being broke

Poverty can strike for several reasons. Not finding work or not getting paid for work you done. If you are not getting enough work, it might be because you are not doing enough marketing. (Leif 2011)

9.11 Legal Issues

There are several legal issues which need to consider as a freelancer. One of them is taxation. Freelancing is a form of self-employment, you are earning income. As a freelancer you are obligated to report your income according to the standards set in your country. These regulations and processes vary by country, and it is your personal task to comply with them.

9.12 Guide Conclusion

At the end of this guide hopefully you have some basic understanding of freelancing, and you received valuable information to kick-start your freelancer career alongside, how to overcome specific challenges, manage your time, projects and become successful. Remember freelancing is a special journey, which will help you to earn more experiences and boost your career progression to become an entrepreneur.

10 CONCLUSION

The results of the project clearly indicated that online freelancing is new interesting phenomenon with an exponentially increasing trend on a global level which deserves attention and cannot be ignored, since it will have significant effects in the upcoming years, on the global job market in both developing and developed countries, promoting the free flow of online services affected by the global demand and supply.

Furthermore it can be stated that online freelancing is a valid alternative for undergraduate students on the field of business and IT technologies since it provides them with a unique freedom and independence alongside the international environment, variable professional skills and experience, which can be used as an alternative way to become an entrepreneur.

It would be wise to study freelancing more extensively from different point of views, to provide more cohesive data on the topic and to promote better the field for students, in the future possibly integrated into entrepreneurial studies.

The total conversion of the proposed draft content into a fully illustrated guide could serve as a useful and valuable asset to both the readers and author in short and long-term perspectives as well.

11 EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

In the beginning of this thesis project the author was extremely motivated and enthusiastic about the project. However during the development and definition process of the topics, the author met with many yet unfaced challenges, which were mentioned in the limitations and boundaries sections. Due to these identified limitations and boundaries alongside, the scope and timeline of the project the author had to cut down and fine tune several topics and areas of the project. The author was struggling especially finding the right traditional and online sources for the theoretical part, and the assessment of research methodology also yielded as a notable challenge.

There was a major delay in the writing process, which was caused both by personal and environmental factors in the author's life. Luckily in 2015 spring the author was able to continue the previously started work, and finish the thesis project, while meeting the goals and objectives, on a sufficient level.

The results of the project thesis served as valuable information for the author, which will be used in his freelancer career in the future, alongside the knowledge and skills gained on the fields of research methodology and planning.

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13 APPENDIX

THE PLANNING PROCESS