

## **The Biggest Mistake Freelancers Make**

by Kathy Poole

Ah, the life of a freelancer. Finally, you are your own boss. You set your own hours, do what you want to do, go where you want to go. Well, sort of...

While you're basking in the glow of freelance freedom, don't get too carried away. You no longer have to answer to a boss, but that doesn't mean you can relax and "go with the flow." In fact, now you need to be more self-disciplined than ever before. No one will penalize you for getting to your desk 10 minutes late, but you may lose valuable business – and revenue – if you give yourself too much latitude and not enough structure.

The biggest mistake freelancers make is turning self-employment into an excuse for self-indulgence. Before the ink is dry on their brand-new business cards, they are deciding to never work on Fridays and counting how many four-day weekends they can take before the end of the year. While other freelancers – the prosperous ones – are preparing a marketing campaign or asking clients for referrals, the undisciplined newbies are closing up shop at 1 pm so they can go to the beach or play video games.

I never liked the word "self-discipline" until I became a freelance copywriter and coach. Then I discovered that the only way to succeed at self-employment is by gently disciplining myself to work even when I don't want to, and even when I don't have any pressing projects to complete.

Self-discipline doesn't mean beating myself into submission. It simply means tapping into my inner strength so I can do the things that are important to me. If it's important for me to have financial freedom, it becomes much easier to make a few cold calls or to start on a project that isn't due for two weeks.

As a freelancer, you have to work hard even when you don't have any work to do. You may have zero assignments right now, but that doesn't mean you can take the day off. It means you need to spend most of your time getting new business, new clients, new assignments. At least in the beginning, a freelancer's job is almost 100 percent marketing.

Sometimes it seems that freelancers buy into the "if you build it, they will come" fallacy. They get their business cards and letterhead printed, purchase office furniture and supplies, and put up a website. Then they wait for business to come to them. It just doesn't work that way. If it did, every freelancer would be rich. And lazy.

Here's the truth: Unless you have the self-discipline to work at your business – even when you have no assignments – you will not get very far. Unless you have the self-discipline, guts and knowledge to market yourself (or ask someone to help you), you will never prosper as a freelance writer, graphic artist, web developer, photographer, event planner or whatever.

Don't despair. It's possible to prosper as a freelancer. Every day, take at least one action that builds or nourishes your business, even if it means stepping outside of your comfort zone. If you don't know much about marketing, spend your work time learning. Read, talk to other freelancers, or consult experts like those at SCORE or the Small Business Administration. The information is out there.

If you can learn, you can market your freelance business. If you can market, you can start to make money. And if you can discipline yourself to keep working at your business every day, even when you feel discouraged, then you can become a truly prosperous freelancer.

What action will you take today to become a successful freelancer? Do it now!

Kathy Poole has had a highly profitable freelance writing business since 1985. Now, as a Writer's Coach, she helps other writers start, run and expand their businesses and create lives of prosperity and joyful abundance. For more information, resources and inspiration, or for a free special report, visit [Prosperous Writer](#) e-mail Kathy at [kathy@prosperouswriter.com](mailto:kathy@prosperouswriter.com).