



10 BRUTAL MISTAKES NEW FREELANCERS MAKE

(And How You Can Avoid Them)

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In terms of full disclosure, there are a couple of sales links in this report.

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INTRODUCTION

When you just start out freelancing, you will most certainly start looking for jobs on outsourcing sites like [oDesk](#), [Elance](#) and [Freelancer](#) - it makes sense to start there right?

And there is absolutely nothing wrong with starting in these places, it's how I got started as a freelance writer and social media consultant and it's still where I get the majority of my clients from.

The issue isn't with getting jobs from these sites, the issue comes when you're a newbie freelancer, just starting out and being green, not knowing the layout of the land.

So, to help you out, here are the 10 mistakes I made when I first started out as a freelancer, and how you can avoid them and have a super successful career/business as a freelancer.



MISTAKE I - TIME MANAGEMENT

(Missing Deadlines)

When you're first starting out as a freelancer, it can be difficult to know how long a job is going to take you.

In the beginning, when I first started freelance writing (and particularly as I was still working a full time 9-5 job), I missed a couple of deadlines which resulted in losing the client and a bad review against my oDesk profile.

Be realistic about your own free time and how long a job will take.

As an example, a 500 word SEO article that you know nothing about (from a keyword perspective) should take you 40-50 minutes including research.

Whereas as the same article about a topic you are familiar with, will probably only take 30 minutes.

Factor this in when letting clients know how long it will take and manage your time accordingly - use your calendar to schedule time in for your freelance work!



MISTAKE 2 - CHARGING TOO LITTLE FOR A JOB

This is a common mistake that most new freelancers make, particularly when you're starting out and not sure what to charge.

If you're just breaking into the freelancing scene on sites like oDesk, it's a good strategy initially to have your rate low - but only do this for the first month.

Then you want to increase your rate, particularly if your skill set is very specific, such as being a web developer or designer - you should definitely be charging around the \$60 an hour mark.

Don't sell yourself short, otherwise you could find yourself stuck with clients on an ongoing basis who are paying you too little for what you're providing.

This is what happened to me when I started out in social media consulting - I charged too low initially and it is very difficult to increase your rates on existing clients.

So it's best to price yourself accordingly and only work with clients that value your work.



MISTAKE 3 - COMMUNICATION

(Seeking Clarification When You Don't Understand)

This is a very common mistake and a mistake that can still happen even once you're a seasoned freelancer.

Communication is key in any relationship and even more so in an online business relationship where you may never meet your clients.

Make sure you understand each job fully before commencing, asking as many questions as you can up front so that you understand what the client is looking for.

It's better to ask a whole bunch of questions than deliver something that completely misses the mark of what the client was looking for.



MISTAKE 4 - WORKING WITH ANY CLIENT

(Picking the Wrong Clients)

This is easy to happen when you're just starting out.

You might not be aware, but there are some clients you want to avoid as a new freelancer.

Things to look out for, particularly on outsourcing sites like oDesk, are

- a) Make sure the client is payment verified,
- b) Make sure the client has positive feedback and
- c) Does the client include company information, ie, can you find them in a Google search?

By ensuring these 3 things are met, you'll ensure you don't end up working for a client and NOT getting paid.

I learnt this lesson the hard way and it cost me \$1,000 in my time for unpaid work!

As a side note, when working with clients on oDesk, if you are offered a fixed price rate, you need to understand that oDesk will not guarantee payment. They only do this on hourly based rates - so bear this in mind when you're just starting out.



MISTAKE 5 - BEING NEGATIVE

(Getting Angry at Clients)

This can happen very easily - particularly when you're communicating via email.

Keep emails direct and positive and never vent your frustrations directly to the client.

I always ensure that I read my emails twice before sending them to make sure nothing can be misconstrued in what I've written.

Getting angry at a client will not win you any favours and will more than likely lose you clients and get you negative ratings on your outsourcing profile.

We all need to vent, but do it to a colleague or friend, not to your client!



MISTAKE 6 - NOT CONVERTING CLIENTS

(Not Providing Ideas for Follow Up)

As a new freelancer, it's important to build your client base, both on and off outsourcing sites like oDesk.

In my [ebook](#), I go into detail about how to convert your oDesk clients into long term clients, but the gist is that you want to over deliver.

Make a suggestion around how you could help them further.

Just by doing this one thing will increase your client base by 80%.



MISTAKE 7 - NOT DIVERSIFYING

(Holding all Your Eggs in One Basket)

This is very important when you're first starting out.

You don't want to rely on a couple of clients for all your income, you want to diversify.

I'd take it one step further and also look to diversify your skill base so that you have multiple income streams.

When I first started out, I fell into this false sense of security with one client who was providing me with 90% of my earnings and then when that suddenly fell through, I was left trying to figure out how I was going to make ends meet!

Don't let this happen to you, diversify as soon as you can.

My ebook provides a detailed list on the types of side gigs a freelance writer can include in their skill base to increase their income base, so if you are looking for some ideas, check it out [here](#).



MISTAKE 8 - DOING WORK YOU DON'T LIKE

This is a big mistake I made when I first started out - it's a danger a lot of new freelancer's can fall into.

You say yes to everything, even if it's work that you don't particularly like doing, just because you can do it.

Don't do this.

You will quickly lose motivation and no matter how much you're being paid, you'll procrastinate and run the risk of damaging your ratings and client feedback.

Only take on work that makes sense to your business and that you actually enjoy doing.



MISTAKE 9 - SLACKING OFF

This is something that happens to every single person that freelances - it's very easy to be distracted when you're working from home.

Freelancing takes a certain amount of discipline to still have set work hours to get client work done.

My advice - schedule your day so you know what you should be doing or what needs doing.

If you know that the afternoons are not super productive for you, get up early and get the majority of your 'heavy' work out of the way.

So in the afternoon, you can either do a few menial administration tasks or even better, finish working for the day!



MISTAKE 10 - DON'T FAKE IT

(Don't Take on Work You Can't Do)

I know some people say that this is a good idea, to 'fake it till you make it', and while I'm a huge supporter for being a 'relative expert' don't say you can definitely do something if you can't or have no way of figuring out how to do it.

Clients are pretty savvy on sites like oDesk, they can tell if you're lying.

Stick to what you know, or what you can easily figure out and you'll have a very successful freelancing career!



BONUS - HAVE WORK/LIFE BALANCE

It can be all too easy to get caught up in your freelancing work and forget to have a life.

It's one of the pitfalls of freelancing, particularly if you work from home.

Set yourself some work hours and stick to them.

This could be that you do 5 hours work in the morning and then another 3 hours work later on at night.

Do what works for you, but make sure you schedule in some down time every single day.

You need to spend time with family and friends, it's important to your overall well being.

I'm a huge believer in scheduling everything into my calendar, because then I can quickly see how my day looks and where I can be flexible and move things around.



The key to avoiding these mistakes is to be aware of them, to walk into this lifestyle with your eyes wide open and just hit the ground running!

If you are looking at getting started in freelance writing, my ebook, [The Definitive Guide to Getting Freelance Writing Work on oDesk](#) could be a good fit for you.

I cover everything; from what to include in your profile to attract clients, my proposals and emails that I use to get interviews and gigs and how to convert clients into ongoing, recurring revenue.

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Waste Basket Image

Clock

Money

Pink Telephone

Rotten Apple

Angry

Lightbulb

Eggs

Male Distaste

Washing on Line

Fake Horse

Yoga