



What you need to know when considering going freelance and Setting Up on your own in Motion Graphics

design – direction – graphics – animation – cgi – visual effects

www.dazpix.co.uk

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE QUITTING THE JOB AND TAKING THE PLUNGE

Starting a freelance Motion Graphics or Design business can be a daunting, scary, fun, exciting, anxiety filled, but very rewarding step in your career. You'll need to be able to cope with everything yourself, there will be no backup or other staff members, and you will need to find the right balance between the administrative side and the creative side. You may well find that your emotions see-saw from the pleasure of working from home, to the nightmare that your client won't leave you alone for a minute, or your computer breaks down.

However, there are a few more important things you should think about before starting your freelance business and this is what we will briefly look at here.

Startup Finances

Many people think that they need to borrow a large sum of money to start-up their business, but this is wrong. Any good business should start with as little debt as possible and grow when the time is right. Don't go out and buy everything you think you need immediately, buy kit, software and office supplies as you need them, and budget for them in a job to make the costs easier to swallow. Start with the basics, a computer, a good screen, a decent desk and chair, and the software you need to create your work. You probably already have these if you are considering going freelance, so maybe just get a couple of essentials like a decent photo printer/scanner and perhaps a DSLR camera. Consider starting a new business or current account at your bank to keep your business finances separate, and to make the paperwork easier when it comes to vat and income tax.

Getting your freelance business set up can be a quick and painless process if you know what you're doing – so read on and see what else you should consider.

If you don't have a huge Portfolio, don't worry, keep it lean and mean

Starting your freelance business doesn't mean you need a huge array of client projects on your reel immediately. Edit together your best pieces of work and keep it short, no longer than 1 minute 30 seconds is a good guide. See what is missing, what isn't strong enough and what you have too much of in your showreel and be brutal with it, chop it out. Consider spending a couple of weeks working on unpaid self commissioned projects to fill the gaps and give yourself the best chances of winning work by showing the full array of skills you can offer your potential clients. Get your showreel online, then scour the job boards, various sites and newsletters out there with job news that you can contact potential clients through once you get your showreel where you are happy and proud to show it off. Confidence in your abilities and passion breeds work.

Ensure your Value relates to your Quality

A common mistake that Freelancers make, happens at the very beginning when they start out, or when cash is in short supply. Reducing your rates is the worst thing you can do, as well as allowing yourself to be talked down from your original quote - although there must be some small level of flexibility in this. Know our value and stick with it, the moment you drop your rates you are undervaluing yourself and your work and it will be difficult to raise your rates back to where they were. Clients you'll want to avoid at all costs are those 'looking for something for nothing' and will almost never be of any good use to your business future. Some have been known to get freelancers to work for nothing speculatively, to win a project, and then as soon as the budget materialises, they are somewhere else with your ideas.

Also remember that your rates will dictate what type of clients you attract. If your rates are too low, then you'll be attracting bottom end clients. Likewise if your rates are too high, you will miss out on a lot of middle budget work. Look at what you produce and charge the rates accordingly. If you aren't sure what to charge, talk to other Freelancers, look at small studio ratecards and see what you offer that is similar. Most Motion Graphics artists in the UK charge somewhere between £150-£400 (\$225-\$600) per day, but this is a loose guide and is dependent upon the experience, skill, client and project criteria.

design – direction – graphics – animation – cgi – visual effects

www.dazpax.co.uk

Too Much Work or Too Little

As we are all painfully aware, the economy can fluctuate greatly, budgets can rise and fall and work can materialise and disappear as fast as you can say Freelance Motion Graphics Designer. Planning properly for the times when you will suddenly be short of work will help keep your business and your sanity afloat during those difficult times. But, by understanding that this will happen, you're able to plan better and keep better control of your money and spending.

Force yourself to keep some money by for the leaner weeks, don't buy kit until you need it, and remember you have bills to pay. If you are currently employed and thinking of going Freelance, consider saving all the money you would spend as an employee ie. travel costs, lunches out etc. and squirrel that money away every week or month as a little reserve.

The Dreaded Paperwork - Invoicing and Accounts

These two essential requirements were always the aspects that scared most creatives wanting to go Freelance, after all it goes against the grain to enjoy using spreadsheets, we would much rather use After Effects. Today, there are a vast array of invoicing and accounting applications and websites out there that will help take the pain out of keeping track of the books. It is actually quite simple if you stay on top of it and do a little bit of organised number recording as you go along. Once things are going well in the business, consider getting an accountant to handle your tax return and (if necessary) vat accounts, it is most likely they will actually save you money as well as time even after their fees.

Clients by nature, Never pay on time - be warned

Like any business, cash flow is an important part of keeping afloat. Just because you have lots of money owed to you, doesn't mean you have done well until it arrives in your bank account. Clients will delay paying as long as possible, especially if they are a large organisation with their own accounts department. After all, their accountants are paid to save them money and would never be applauded for quick payment. Most Freelancers specify 30 days from date of invoice as a payment request or requirement. If you get paid in this period count yourself very fortunate. Most of the time you will need to gently remind them to pay, be courteous and ensure you resend the information such as the amount owing, invoice number etc. to make their job as easy as possible. If you make it difficult for them to pay you then they may just delay further and put your invoice to the bottom of the pile. The most important thing to remember is to make sure you write and send your invoice the moment you complete the job - no one will pay until they've got that!

What You'll miss about being employed

There are certain drawbacks with Freelancing like anything in this world, but they are outweighed by the positives in setting up on your own. Consider what will change from the office or studio environment. There won't be others around to bounce ideas off and have a laugh with, you might feel a little isolated. There won't be any backup in terms of somebody to help you with a piece of software or technical issue. There won't be other equipment to use if you have a problem. You won't have access to vtr's, huge storage systems, or superfast networks. It's also worth remembering what you will lose out on financially by quitting your job. There won't be any paid holiday, no life insurance, pension contributions or healthcare. You will of course earn for what you do instead of lining your bosses pocket, and you won't be bogged down in endless meetings.

Just because you have a Computer and a copy of....

The hard truth is that Freelancing isn't right for everyone. Just because you have a computer, some software, read all the [freelancing advice](#), doesn't mean you're going to be able to cut it. Spending 4 hours a day working and 6 hours surfing or playing games isn't going to get you anywhere. Downloading all the best plugins isn't going to make you the best designer, and watching the best creative videos on vimeo isn't necessarily going to give you the creative ideas you need to be one of the best in your field and make a good living.

Some people have it and some people don't. It takes discipline and dedication to build a freelance business, especially if you are working from home, surrounded by your comforts and distractions. Keeping track of clients, payments, open jobs and potential leads can be a daunting but necessary task. Bear in mind the countless emails you'll receive the social networking, the constant phone calls direct to your mobile (no reception to take them). Think about these aspects before taking the plunge.

If you want to go Freelance...GO FOR IT!

Your freelance business will be incredibly rewarding, different every day, hard work and fun. Working from home (or your own office) can be really excellent if you are dedicated and disciplined enough to make the best use of your time. The freedom that comes with freelancing is amazing and something you will not want to give up. If you make a success of it, you are going to wish you had done this earlier, it really is a wonderful way of working. The hours are your own to choose, you can take certain projects or leave them, as you wish, you can take a holiday when you want (unfortunately unpaid of course), and spend more time doing what you love and less time with office politics and travelling.

Remember the things above and keep a level head and you'll be able to accomplish anything you set out to do, and do it on your own time. If you feel you want to go Freelance after all the consideration above - then make the most of it and you'll never turn back.

This guide can be downloaded as a complete pdf file [here](#).