

A long, straight road stretches into the distance, flanked by water. Two small figures are walking away in the distance. The text is overlaid on the road.

What mom forgot to tell you about remote and freelance work

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*To my Wonderful Wife and Kids who put up with many years of
grumpy, stressed out me while I figured all these things out.*

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This isn't a book of answers

That's a funny way to start a book. Aren't people after answers?

"Tell me what three things I need to do to double my rate".

"What are the five best ways to get new clients?"

"Should I bill hourly or by the project?"

All important questions! There have been countless pages written and podcasts recorded on just these issues - How do I find clients and make sure I'm getting the proper compensation for my work?

You need to decide those things, especially if you are still considering whether or not to make the switch from a salaried position, or still in the early days of your freelancing career. But have you ever asked a former freelancer who finally "gave up" and switched back to full-time why they did so? The most common reason I've found that people do so is the unpredictable workload and long hours that come from being consultant, marketer and business manager all at the same time. The "feast and famine" of client loads and the evening hours spent marketing yourself after you've put in a full work day, so that you have something lined up for when the current project ends. As the joke goes, "I decided to freelance so I could be free to work *all* the time."

This little book focuses on those problem. Smoothing out the peaks and troughs, helping you double up the effect of your time, pointing out when *not* to do everything yourself. It isn't very long, and I've done my best not to pad it. Your time is valuable - get the main point,

and get out! I hope that each and every one of them is something that will be immediately useful in improving your life (and bottom line).

Freelancing *is* a great life! All of the freedoms you've heard about are true. Also, if you don't plan your life well and prepare for them, all of the stresses. I hope I can help you get rid of some of the stress so you can fully enjoy being your own person.

What's your "remoteness" rating?

It is estimated that within five years of the time of this writing, nearly 40% of all U.S. workers will be at least part-time remote. If that seems extraordinarily high, think about all of the jobs today that really don't require a trip to the office. Remote doesn't necessarily mean "sitting at home in your pajamas". Your electricity meter reader? Someday that will report itself, but even now, what purpose does that person have for first visiting a central office before starting their route? (To be honest, they may not even do that now, for all I know. Just goes to show how quickly things are moving in this direction).

It's a pretty good chance that you'll be switching to some remote work sooner rather than later. For many people this means simply logging in from down the road a few days per week; for others, it may suddenly give them the freedom to live some place more conducive to their lifestyle or family situation. While this brings about a lot of great lifestyle changes that we already know and probably look forward to, there's a problem that only gets cursory acknowledgment when you decide to pack your bags for Belize.

I want you to consider for a moment the difference between two parts of "remote" - the words "alone" and "lonely". Alone is easy - it's a quantifiable word about the number of people around you. It's also what most people think of when they hear "working remotely" - you're not in the office, so you are alone at home, without the need to be a constant part of group decisions. "Lonely" is much tougher. It is caused by so many factors that it is impossible to really come up with a good measure. Yet it is *imperative* that you do so if you are thinking about working remotely, whether you're planning to

become a digital nomad or just work from across town. We need to consider the level of our remoteness - call it our "remoteness rating" - on our feeling of isolation.

You need to think of the cost of lowering your remoteness rating as a business expense, and include that when you calculate your rates.

"Imperative?" That sounds rather strong - why such a harsh word? In a nutshell, this is going to be one of the leading factors in your personal happiness. Which translates to your ability to work well. Which translates to how much money you bring in. So just like your laptop or software licenses, you need to think of the cost of lowering your remoteness rating as a business expense, and include that when you calculate your rates.

You may *think* that you're an introvert who prefers the company of books, and looks forward to the opportunity to be cut off from distractions for a year to finish that project that's been gathering dust. You will be surprised at how much contact with others you actually have most days, and what a huge gap it can become after a while. You WILL feel lonely.

What I'd like to do here is to help you consider a lot of the factors that can go into creating a feeling of being cut off, so that if you do jump on that plane (or just move to rural Kansas), you will be prepared. Yes, working from a beach in Thailand sounds wonderful! Tourist areas are expensive, so you'll want to find an apartment somewhere. Do you speak Thai? How long do you think it will take you to learn to read and understand, "He'o min argent lu stringiu tantu?" These aren't questions to be brushed off.

Consider these questions about your remote work plan:

- Is it easy to drop into the office or a local collaboration

spot from time to time, or are you completely cut off from interacting in person with your company?

- Are you in your own country, or a place that is culturally similar to your own?
- How difficult is it to learn the language of where you've chosen to live?
- How difficult is it to have a beer and chat with people who speak your own language?
- Are you in or near a city with a good-sized community of people with your profession, and events to attend?
- Do you have children, and will you need to be home "on time" in the evenings to share family life?

How much will it take to allow you to live a relaxed, normal life in the place you've chosen to settle down?

The single theme running through all them is simple: How much will it take to allow you to live a relaxed, normal life in the place you've chosen to settle down? Can you pick up the language to be conversational with a simple effort, or do you need to allow for the expense of time off for classes? Is there a community of similar people you can chat with on the weekend, or do you need to travel - perhaps a long distance - to attend a Meetup?

Don't just answer these casually! These are business expenses - sit down and write out the answers to these questions, and then find out actual prices of language classes or a travel weekend to the provincial capitol. If you are like everyone else in the world, money gets tight sometimes, and these will seem like "extras" that are the first items to be cut from the monthly spending. That can sometimes start a bit of a spiral; best to anticipate it and charge accordingly.

This is your "remoteness tax", and you had better be prepared to pay it!