



Living the Freelance Lifestyle

Summary Handout

Introduction

In this installment of the Academy Insider, we're touching on the topic of lifestyle. Specifically, we'll address the question of how we, as freelancers, can take better advantage of the freedom and flexibility we have as self-employed professionals.

To discuss this topic, I've invited four freelancers to share their experiences.

You'll find that each freelancer is doing things a little bit differently. Each is in a different stage of his/her business. And each has a unique set of personal circumstances.

But the common theme is that they're all mindful and purposeful about leveraging the freedom and flexibility that freelancing affords. In other words, this stuff doesn't just happen on its own. You have to plan and make it happen.

Note: You won't find any "4-hour workweek" stuff here. None of these freelancers are sailing around the world, drinking Corona, and working only when they feel like it!

Rather, these are all real and relatable professionals who're taking control of their freelance businesses and using it to further their life goals.

Matthew Loomis

Matt Loomis is an online copywriter, blogger and affiliate marketer. He runs his own web business as well as having some copywriting clients.

He started Build Your Own Blog four years ago. He earns income through it via affiliate partnerships and joint venture partnerships. He's also in the early stages of creating an info product for Build Your Own Blog.

How are you taking advantage of the freedom and flexibility freelancing affords?

Matt is able to spend more time with his kids because he can set his own hours. His kids are homeschooled. They hire a family member to administer the homeschooling four days a week, and then Matt works with them one day a week.

On the day he spends with the kids, he doesn't start working until his wife comes home in the late afternoon. He's a night owl anyway, so this arrangement feeds his creativity.

Additionally, Matt is able to visit his mom who's currently experiencing health issues. She lives 230 miles away. But he's able to visit her almost every week and attend some of her medical appointments. If needed, he could stay with her for an extended period of time and continue to work.

Do you try to get some work done on those days you're with the kids?

Initially, Matt tried to multi-task but found it frustrating. Now, he just enjoys the time with his kids. Then at 3:00 or so he goes downstairs and gets to work.

You're better off segmenting kid time from work time. He might do minor tasks, like replying to emails and admin. But he's learned to not get into anything big.

How do you deal with unexpected changes to your schedule, like when you visit your mom?

Matt has learned to be improvise and be flexible. When traveling to visit his mom, his wife will drive and Matt will use the time to work. He will also work from his Mom's house or a hotel.

When he gets home from a trip, he will sometimes work into the evening, even though he's tired.

How are you able to manage new client work while maintaining this flexibility?

You have to be flexible and organized. You also need to delegate when you can. Matt has hired a part-time assistant to help with some tasks.

You have to accept that your income, schedule and work is going to go up and down. You have to be nimble and not expect it to be like a "regular job."

Having steady clients helps too. Continually onboarding new clients takes time. Try to get retainer agreements because you'll get more efficient with the work over time.

You also have to know when to take on new work -- and when NOT to take on new work.

Where can listeners learn more about you?

Website: buildyourownblog.net

Facebook: facebook.com/buildyourownblog

Twitter: @mattloomis on Twitter

YouTube: subscribe to Build Your Own Blog on YouTube

New site in development: kaboomis.com

Gina Gould

Gina Gould started her freelance copywriting business as a side gig in December 2016. Today, she continues to work a full-time day job, but she's grown her freelance business significantly since launching.

Gina's niche is safety and industrial B2B markets. Her clients include a company that creates and sells training videos, an international engineering and industrial services company and an agency that specializes in marketing for safety and industrial companies.

How are you intentionally taking advantage of the freedom and flexibility that freelancing offers?

Gina has been putting a majority of her freelance income towards paying off student loans. She's on track to pay off her 10-year loans in about four years!

Once her student loans are paid off, she'll feel more comfortable quitting her day job. Ultimately, her goal is to freelance full time.

In addition, Gina's husband was recently laid off from work. Gina is using the extra income from her writing business to pay the bills.

How are you able to stay so disciplined with saving?

As soon as she gets paid, Gina puts 30% into a dedicated savings account for taxes, then sets 10% aside for business expenses. The rest goes toward student loans as an extra monthly payment.

She continued this process even when her husband was laid off. She just pays a little less to her loans than previously.

How do you manage to juggle a day job while transitioning to freelance?

Gina makes a conscious effort to maintain a regular work schedule. Most mornings, before heading to her day job, she spends about an hour marketing her services. During breaks or her lunch hour, she may check email and make some client calls. She does all of her freelance writing at home in the evenings.

She tries to save weekends for herself, only working her freelance business if she absolutely has to.

What did you have to give up to find that time?

Gina started by writing two evenings a week. But sometimes life gets in the way, so she has to be flexible. She will write three nights a week occasionally.

What are your plans for when you're freelancing full time?

Gina and her husband plan to start a family within the next couple of years or so. By then, her loans should be paid off. Her freelancing will enable her to quit her day job, work from home and raise their kids.

Where can listeners learn more about you?

Website: ginagouldcopy.com

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/gina-gould/

Tania Casselle

Tania Casselle has been freelancing for more than 20 years as a writer and editor. Today, she works mostly as a book doctor, book editor and writing coach. She conducts in person and online seminars to help people write fiction and non-fiction books.

How do you take advantage of the freedom and flexibility that freelancing affords you?

Tania considers self-employment to be a great joy and privilege. There are downsides, of course, but she revels in the opportunity to choose how she lives her life.

She believes her freelance work is there to support her personal development, spiritual work, creative work and relationships. Not the other way around.

A few years ago, you experienced a setback that turned into a blessing. Tell us about that

Tania moved frequently in 2014, living in four different homes over eight months. She was looking for a house to buy and dealing with mortgage applications etc., so it was all very disruptive.

Due to the domestic upheaval of relocating, she went down to working about 15 hours a week, when she had been putting in many more hours previously.

But even though her hours decreased, her income increased! She became much more efficient when she had no other choice. She also became more selective with projects and clients. She started working with better clients at better rates.

Now that Tania is settled, she puts in about 21 hours a week, excluding her writing seminars. But that's still about half of what she was working before.

At the same time, her income remains about 50% higher than when she was working full time!

How do you manage your schedule?

Tania tries to limit her billable work to three days a week. She sets a monthly financial goal she knows how much paid work she'll require.

It helps to have good repeat clients. Retainer clients enable her to be more efficient.

Tania tracks her time on everything, even non-billable hours, so she has a realistic idea of what her hourly rate would be. With this information, she routinely negotiates with clients so that she's charging appropriate fees.

In some cases, she has stepped away from projects she's couldn't afford to take on.

Is it scary to walk away from clients or projects?

Yes! She wouldn't have done it voluntarily, but at the time she had no choice. She had anticipated going back and picking them up later, but she discovered she didn't have to.

As freelancers, we owe it to ourselves to be very selective about who we work with.

Many creative people feel that structure and schedules hamper creativity. What do you think?

Freedom and flexibility require discipline and focus. The reason Tania can travel and take weekend getaways is that she has a plan to do it while also getting her work done efficiently.

You see travel and retreats as a necessity, not a luxury that you should feel guilty about. How do you avoid letting guilt get in the way?

It helps to have supportive people around you. Try to get your family on board and make them feel a part of it.

Tania doesn't see her trips as a luxury. Her work is there to support that, not the other way around. She sets the priorities.

Try starting slowly. Observe one day a week as a day of rest or Sabbath with no interruptions. Turn your phone off. Set a few boundaries that feel manageable.

Where can listeners learn more about you?

Website: TCwriter.com

Jeanne Noorman

Jeanne Noorman is a freelance writer and blogger, based in Michigan. She specializes in creative web copy and business blog posts.

Currently, she's building her own blog, Rehearsing Retirement, to help people determine what they want to do with the rest of their life and find ways to make it happen.

How are you being intentional with the freedom and flexibility freelancing offers?

Jeanne travels a lot to spend time with her grown children. As a freelancer, she has the flexibility to visit each of them a couple times a year.

In September, Jeanne took an entire month off from her business to take an Alaskan cruise, spend time with family and attend a blogging conference.

Jeanne didn't leave a 50-hours-a-week job to work at home 60 or 70 hours a week. She's structured her schedule to take her evenings and weekends off.

Additionally, Jeanne was able to help her mom after knee replacement surgery, assist her daughter with her new baby and help her other daughter move to a new house.

What habits, routines and strategies work well for you?

Jeanne has been very intentional in approaching her freelance career. She advocates structuring each day and planning ahead. She uses block scheduling for her projects and is able to realistically plan how long tasks will take.

She also maintains a routine schedule for certain tasks, such as invoicing and tweaking her website.

How were you able to take an entire month off from client work?

Jeanne began planning in April to take her month off in September. She let existing clients know that she would be away and asked for essential project information in advance, such as an editorial calendar for the blog articles she writes. New clients were told that she could not start work for them until October.

Even though she didn't perform any client work in September, she still had income because she had completed work for her retainer clients.

Where can listeners learn more about you?

Website: jeannenoorman.com

Retirement website: rehearsingretirement.com