Chapter 1: Why Become a Freelancer?

The question of why you should become a freelancer is different for everyone. Some people may want to simply work from home. Others may see earnings potential. Whatever your reason, you need to make sure that it is the *right* reason for you.   After all, it can be quite a risk. Especially if you're quitting your "day job" to strike out on your own.

Being a freelance web designer will change your life. From the moment you declare yourself open for business, you are the key to the entire operation. You'll make all the important decisions, such as how much to charge for a project and what the theme of your office decor will be.

"I can do it better."
If you have ever worked for someone else, be it a large or small company, chances are you've said the above phrase to anyone who would listen (except maybe the boss). Well, freelancing is your stage to prove it.

When viewing things through an employee's eyes, it's easy to see where a project (or even an entire company) have gone wrong. Whether it's incompetent sales people who over–promise what you can do, a lack of communication between departments, a lack of resources to do the job right or general mismanagement, you have seen the mistakes and have confidence that you can and will do better.

Being a freelancer will give you that chance, in good time. But it's up to you to not only dissect the mistakes you have witnessed (or have been a part of), you must also figure out how they could have been avoided in the first place.

A major part of being in business is learning how to avoid costly mistakes. Mistakes will happen, no matter how much you prepare. But learning from the past will help you avert large–scale disasters and also provide you with a sense of how to deal with the smaller ones that will eventually rear their heads.

What Went Right?
If you are already an experienced designer, then you'll also want to look back at the things that went right during your employment.

For example, think back to a project that went well. One where you were able to use your creative talents to develop a website that the client loved. Ask yourself:

- Why did this project go so well?
- What made this project different from others you worked on?

Taking the time to analyze both the good and the bad elements of your previous experiences can help you put your best foot forward in your new venture.

Create Your Ideal Working Environment

One of the tougher aspects of working in an office full of people is creating a work environment that lends itself to creativity. For some of us, it may be nearly impossible to do that in a cubicle. Limited space and the threat of co-workers popping in at any moment can really mess with your creative mojo.

If you're a freelancer working from home, however, you have the power to set up your workspace to match your personality. You can hang inspiring art on your wall, invest in a comfy office chair, listen to your favorite music and even install a lock on your office door to ensure privacy (Tip: this does not work for kids and pets).

Probably the best part of setting up your office space is stocking up on the hardware and software you'll need. No longer are you limited to that clunky old Pentium 4 machine running Windows XP. Now, you can rock whatever processor and OS that your budget allows. As a bonus, you get to setup your gear the way YOU want it.

Find Financial Freedom

One of the greatest risks of starting your own freelance web design business is also one of its greatest rewards. In the beginning, you may have no clue how much money you're really going to make. Another, more positive, way to look at things is that there really is no limit to what you can make.

Because you're not necessarily locked in to a specific set of hours or terms with an employer, you can charge what you want (more on that later) and take on as many projects as you want. So, you do have some sense of control over your salary. Whether you book one $50,000 project or ten $5,000 projects is up to you.

It's a good idea to set (realistic) goals for your business and then get working to achieve them.

Family Time

One of my greatest joys since starting my freelance career has been the extra time I've been able to spend with my family. Because I work at home, I get to spend extra time with my daughter. It's truly a priceless benefit that I wouldn't want to miss out on.

While it can be tough to strike a balance with kids, ("Daddy *is* home, but is working right now and can't play"), the opportunity you have to watch them grow up is worth the effort.

Working at home gives you the flexibility to take the kids to school and be there when they get home. It's much easier to get to school plays and sports practices. This is definitely a perk for parents.

The Lowdown

Becoming a freelancer can be very rewarding, if you're doing it for the right reasons.

Just remember that freelancing means:

- A change in lifestyle (for better and/or worse).
- Potentially more time with the ones you love.
- A responsibility to balance all aspects of your business.
- Freedom!