

A Freelancer's Guide to Managing Job Uncertainty During the COVID-19 Crisis



Source:

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/serious-young-multiracial-women-standing-on-street-with-tablet-and-laptop-in-hands-5965610/>

A freelancer's troubles never seem to end, does it? From the start of work till closing, you're faced with everything from complex client acquisitions to impossibly short deadlines and unreasonable clients. All of these seem to be the air and water of the freelance work practice.

And while normal life comes bagged and tagged with unavoidable uncertainties, the overwhelm of the freelance work practice

takes on a life of its own, getting worse (or better) with every change in social and cultural trends.

In recent times, the persisting COVID-19 pandemic has been one of such crises that have dictated the increasing job uncertainty, melancholic mood, deteriorating mental health, and the general feeling of bleakness that has plagued freelancers.

This article seeks to offer a practical guide to freelancers (no matter their industry) on how to navigate job uncertainty during this COVID-19 crisis.

Regroup and Reprioritize

It's easy to get lost in the myriad of questions that come with freelancing. Your degree certificate is barely cold when the questions hit: *Is freelancing safe? Did I make the right choice? How do I guarantee a steady income flow? Where do good clients come from?*

With the pandemic affecting how people consume information and products, it's inevitable that you also have begun to catch yourself up at night, badgering Google for answers while trying in vain to stop the fear rising at the back of your throat.

But first things first, turn away from your computer. Now would be a good time to remind yourself of the reasons you began to freelance in the first place. Stop and smell your

victories and progress (even if it's just a degree you've gotten). Take a good look at your core skills, strengths, and gaps that still need work (this would come in handy soon).

Also, take time to readjust any misplaced priorities, e.g., remember that your present income level (or lack of it thereof) doesn't define you.

Know your net worth

Next comes the not so fun but essential part: Know your net worth! Yes, we admit, this is a tough one to do for a freelancer, but it isn't impossible. Your net wealth is described as the total cash amount of your assets minus the total cash amount of your liabilities.

For a freelancer, this may not be easy to ascertain, but you can start with a general understanding of your present financial state. Knowing an average of your income, recurring expenses, and debts would go a long way to alert you to how much gap there is between your present financial state and your future financial aspirations.

Invest in new skills

Remember that earlier stock-taking session?

Yes?

Great!

This is where your findings begin to come together. Your skill gaps (and maybe even ethics gap) should be obvious to you from the deductions you've made. And that is an excellent thing.

The pandemic has blessed us with more time on our hands, and there aren't many things that can compete with learning as being a great use of time.

Invest in a couple of online courses that are relevant to your industry, career, and niche. Subscribe to blogs and newsletters that provide valuable content in your field. Watch YouTube videos, read books, attend virtual conferences. Any method that works for you without putting you under unhealthy pressures is fine. Just keep learning and improving yourself.

Diversify

The phrase, adapt or die has never been more true for the freelancer than now. As we all seek to adjust to the new realities of COVID-19 (face mask-wearing, social distancing, and teleworking), the freelancer must reinvent and equip himself/herself with relevant skills to these new realities.

For example, the world of journalism has experienced a sharp decline in the news that isn't necessarily COVID-related while upping its demand for pandemic related information. This means an average freelancer may need to become a master of more than one trade.

Evolution has always favored the fluid, not necessarily the strongest. This isn't to say that you need to become a master of all. You just need to reassess your skills in light of what is relevant in your industry and actively begin honing new skills and perspectives. You may also need to enlist external help like time daily tasks reporting timesheet to help you and your team become more effective/productive.

Innovate

It's almost unnecessary to say that digital is the future. You're a freelancer, so you probably understand this reality more than most full contract workers.

But what does this new reality mean for you as a freelancer? For starters, we'll take a guess that you already run as a business organization. Maybe you even have a team of freelancers who work with you (this is a great place to begin if you haven't begun to function this way).

All over the world, small businesses are finding creative ways to provide relevant products and services for their consumers despite the odds of the pandemic. This may mean creating a new product or improving on your existing services.

In the future, the most obvious path would be to make your systems, processes, and services digitally friendly. Creating digital products is a great place to begin.

Network more

This has got to be the oldest trick in the book, leveraging the human truth that we're social beings. These times have served to remind most of us of the actual use and value of Social media.

Networking platforms (physical or virtual) can serve as a medium to connect with contemporaries and experts alike. It can become a treasure mine for mutually beneficial and long-lasting professional relationships.

No matter the industry, the benefits of networking can be astounding, serving to do more in the area of publicity, authority building, ideas banking, etc.

This doesn't just apply to conferences held in your niches or connections with people in your industry. As a business, networking with your customers can help you gain repeat customers and enjoy customer loyalty (a great way to do this is by setting up an email marketing list).

A word of caution, it pays to be deliberate about who and why you're making a connection. Avoid irrelevant connections to avoid information and relationships that feel spammy.

Bottom line

Although the COVID-19 crisis has exponentially increased job uncertainty for the freelancer, it has also presented an immense opportunity for growth and possibilities.

Applying all that you've learned in this guideline will undoubtedly give you a clear handle on managing these times with grace and confidence, wouldn't you agree? Please share your thoughts with us in the comments.



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