

may not want to be or choose to be an active member in a union, but these organizations are a fact of life. They exist for the standardization of pay and working conditions, as well as health and safety issues. To an extent they protect you from the unethical work practices of some employers by the process of weeding out the suspect producers, those that don't have the proper financial backing or are unwilling to meet minimum acceptable wage scales and working conditions.

Pacing Is Important

Remember, it is not to your advantage to work yourself to death. You're in this for the long-term and pacing your job is as important as working steadily. The reason being is that if you become ill or injured due to fatigue, you lose on two counts, (1) you take yourself out of the workforce and

someone replaces you; (2) you have lost your principal source of income by your being unable to work. So pacing is very important! One of the significant benefits of working freelance is that you can work as little or as much as you want, provided you do sound financial planning to meet your expenses.

One temptation that some people fall prey to is booking out of a firm commitment when a better offer comes along. This is a bad practice because it is unfair to the person that you first committed to and it creates doubt in people's mind about your commitment to ethical business practices. Treat people with the respect and dignity that you would expect to be accorded to you and most people will respond in kind. No matter how tempting or lucrative that second job may appear, it's a good policy to hold yourself to your initial commitment. It's peculiar but it always seems to work out that when you lose one job, another comes along if you've treated your clients well and established a sound work record as a craftsman.

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Develop Client Base

One of your principal tasks as a freelance craftsman is to develop a clientele. A well-developed and well-served client base will keep you working year round.

Clients are developed over the years by making contacts in all the disciplines related to your craft. Personal contacts with people at supply companies (when you were working on staff) can be of great help in securing work or, at the very least, spreading the word that you're competent and available.

When the calls start coming in, it's your responsibility to treat potential clients in the manner that you would expect to be treated if you were buying a service. Something that should always be upfront in your mind is the fact that you are providing a service, perhaps solving someone's problem, and to that end professionalism is of prime importance.

Oftentimes, paperwork documentation of some kind is required as part of completion of the job. It is crucial that the presentation be executed in a businesslike fashion for maximum impact. Once you've won your client over, you want to retain their confidence in you and their respect for your work.

As you can see by the points that I've already made, a freelancer must have