It's now ten years since I took the scary steps in becoming a freelance trainer and coach. I left a fantastic job, a great regular salary and a bunch of amazing friends. So what have I learnt about becoming and being a freelancer?

**1. Involve the family**

When deciding to become a freelancer, talk to your partner and close family. How much are you prepared top lose? How will things change, such as hours, time working at home perhaps, the need for help. Will holidays or social outings change? Becoming a freelancer affects others as well as you?

**2. Income and charges**

It helps to work out what is the minimum and ideal income. The minimum is based on little or no holidays, no luxuries or treats. Once you have a minimum figure for a twelve month period, this can help you start to think about how you might charge for your time. Work out how many days a week or month in which you can get paid work. Use these figures to divide in to your minimum annual income and this will give you a sense of a starting or minimal daily rate. [*A useful document can be downloaded from here to help you think about income and costs.*](http://www.skillschannel.tv/downloads.html)*- Freelance Income Calculator.*

**3. Paying yourself**

On a regular monthly salary. you plan life based on that income. Being self employed is completely different. Money comes in some months and not at all in others. Learnt to withdraw the minim and the use drawings once or twice a year to reward yourself based on profit. A useful mindset to get into is to have positive cash in the bank at the end of the year rather than negative cash.

**4. Business stuff**

Do set goals that you want to achieve each year with your business. They are incredibly useful. You should definitely have a working cash flow spreadsheet to keep on top of money. The data is invaluable for planning following years. Get a good accountant who can prove they have a good reputation - ask for references.

**5. Use your network**

Many people in the UK seem to be hesitant to use their network. It's embarrassing or I couldn't seems to be the approach/ How would you feel if you had a couple of challenging projects at work and a professional friend had not made you aware that they were now available? Pretty surprised and possibly disappointed as you would have probably wanted to help. So work your network and keep them up to date. Even today, ten years from leaving my last job possibly 80% of my work still comes through that network.

**6. Be proactive**

It's quite simple. In business, it doesn't come to you, you have to go and get it. Network, network, network. It's people who have met you or know you who are likely to approach you, not web sites or social feeds.

**7. Reinvent yourself**

Keep yourself up to date within your profession and indeed, look for new ways of doing things. Clients can look for something different if it is still the same old same old.

**8. Remember, you are unique**

If people approach you for projects or work ideas, remember that they have sought you out. That means you probably have something they want. Value your knowledge, skill and in particular, experience and network. They have a priced.

**9/ Don't be afraid of sharing**

In my early days, I saw my freelance peers as competitors. Now I happily network with them, share ideas and often work in partnership. It's not just about you, it's what you can bring to you customer and we do not have all the knowledge, skills, equipment or experience.

**10. Enjoy yourself**

The best prediction of your future is whatever you believe it will be. You made the choice to become a freelancer so make it work for you. Choose like minded organisations or partners to work with. As a self employed person you actually have the right to say no, the right to pick and chose when and where you work. You chose if it is going to be great or not.

I know for a fact many would not agree with me but that's the joy of being a freelancer. We are all different and we all have different reasons for successes or failures. For me, these ten things really stand out as important to me, especially when I am coaching new start ups. It's amazing how it helps to shape thinking on becoming a freelancer. Have fun.

*Alec McPhedran is the managing director of Skills Channel TV, a skills development company based in Northamptonshire.*

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