Syllabus

So you want to become a freelancer while you are in school? Below is the outline to help get you there!

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Introduction

Over five years ago, I was like you, pondering the idea of freelancing. I surfed the Internet for hours, learning all I could. I talked to friends and family about what they thought about me freelancing while I was in school. I wanted to explore this fascinating new form of employment, but was unsure.

Like most freelancers, I fell into freelancing. I was presented with a couple of design opportunities from my (then) current employer and my (then) future employer, at the same time. Hunting around on the Internet, I was trying to find out how to handle the opportunities and how much to charge, all of which led me to one conclusion: people do this for a living and call themselves “freelancers.”

And that was all it took. I was presented with an opportunity, and several hours of digging later, I started my freelance career. Five-and-a-half years later, I am still going strong: I am fully self-employed, have a full freelance schedule, steady projects, and well-paying clients, all while having graduated from college less than four months ago (at the time of this writing).

So let me go back to the surfing, hunting, and digging that got me into this crazy world known as freelancing. Five years ago, I was hard-pressed to find ANY information about freelancing as a student. Sure, there was tons of information about freelancing on the side while keeping your full-time job, quitting your job to start freelancing, or turn a stay-at-home career into a stay-at-home career with a steady paycheck. But why not any information about freelancing part-time while going to college? Surely someone has done that before, right?

I had a very hard time finding any information on freelancing as a student.

"Well maybe not," I thought to myself, especially after seeing so many posts and articles online with statements such as "you're not experienced enough to start freelancing in school," or the infamous, "you have to get a real job first when you graduate." But why?

To make a long, five-year-long story short, I ignored all of those nay-sayers, and I am so glad I did. I read every book, website, article, and forum I could get my hungry little hands on. I took my very limited business knowledge (at the time) and started working my ass off; learning new skills, working on getting clients, and working on making the freelance projects I did have awesome and the clients happy.

I tried and experimented with many different techniques when I started freelancing, especially when it came to getting clients, what to charge, how to keep the records, proposal techniques, etc. I tried all of these techniques but most of them failed, mainly because those techniques I read about were directed to other types of freelancers, and not student freelancers.

Over time, however, I started learning what worked for me and what would work given my student status. Lots of trial and error, lots of reading and thinking, and lots of trying and lets see-ing, I finally was able to gain control over this beast called freelancing and have it play well in the sandbox with my collegiate career.

Five long years later, I am now a fresh graduate from college. I have a business growing faster than I can keep up with and I can confidently say that I won't be one of the graduates hunting for a regular 9 to 5 and work for "the man." All of this freelance success happened while I was a more-than-full-time college student, working hard toward two different degrees simultaneously, and had a part-time job for some of that time too. I wanted to prove the nay-sayers wrong. And I did, and still do.

I knew I was not alone. I knew there are students just like me who are interested in bucking the trend and joining the ranks of thousands upon thousands of self-employed individuals who call themselves freelancers. Like I said earlier, while there was virtually no information out there for students wanting to freelance, I wanted to change that, and I did when I launched Students That Freelance over my spring break in March 2010.

About This Handbook

While posting content about various topics in student freelancing is great for the Students That Freelance blog, it isn't comprehensive for those wanting to start freelancing as a student. That is where this book comes into play. More like a course, if you will, I worked to make this handbook a "pick up and run" type of book.

We are busy students, with enough textbooks to read. We need something that will help us get the information we need and fast. We need a structure and a way to plan for an amazing journey into freelancing. What better way than structuring such a book similar to something we already know very well? So, this book is designed like a college course, minus all the tons of reading, long term papers, and massive exams.

I wrote and developed this book as a means to help you learn, plan, and start your own freelance career while still in school. I wrote it for the busy student taking six classes with tons of homework; for the student who participates in athletics that involve a rigorous schedule; and for the student who has a full course load and works a part- or full-time job. I especially wrote it for the student who wants to make their own career path, earn a decent income, and who wants to work less for that income--all before they walk across that stage.

I couldn't agree more with one of my favorite music artists, Drake, who in one of his songs says, "I could relate to kids going straight to the league, when they recognize that you got what it takes to succeed.[1]" If you feel like you have what it takes to reach for something you want, then why wait until the rest of the world says you're ready?

I hope this book helps to take you "straight to the league" and you become extremely successful in your career, all before you graduate and receive that well-earned diploma!

[1] *Drake. "Thank Me Now." Thank Me Later. 2010. Cash Money Records, Universal Records, and UMG Recordings.*