



## Freelancing: Striking Out on your Own

by Virginia Farrington

The internet is filled with advertisements claiming that it is possible to make easy money, with a minimum of effort. This, unfortunately, is fantasy, and deciding to work for your self is big step; it takes time to set up a business and build a client base.

However, this is not the same as impossible, and our four case-studies show that anybody with an idea can make a living, either by working online or by setting up a 'real-world' business.

These people had few formal qualifications, but used their skills and experience to leave full time employment and become their own boss.

What they had was a mixture of ingredients:

- Experience and Skills:** Your experience can be transferred and used to set up a business. If you have spent years in a job, you will have picked up skills.
- Willingness to Learn:** Setting up a successful business is not about how much you know. The key to success is identifying your weaknesses and finding out ways to overcoming them, through learning and willingness to learn and change.
- Confidence:** A freelancer must have confidence, whether it is the outward confidence to sell their service, or a quiet, burning inner belief. If you believe in yourself, others will believe in you and work will begin to flow your way. The first step is the biggest and, once you have taken it, self-confidence will grow.
- Determination:** Determination is a core component. Creating a successful freelancing practice, or small business, requires continual determination and taking action towards your goals.

The self-employed have all of these ingredients, to varying degrees. However, the most important ingredient of all is hard work. Whatever your talent, in the early days, it will take effort to make a full time living. The first year can require an investment of both time and money.



## **A Change in Direction**

Virginia was a VP of Administration for a small graduate school, and left full time employment six years ago, determined to create a different life- and work-style. After a long vacation, and months of seminars, reading, and experimentation, she is now growing a few online businesses.

As a website designer and internet marketer, Virginia has a steady stream of new clients, with her focus on helping small new businesses and professionals create an effective online presence, using her website, SimpleWebsiteService.com. Using her sophisticated internet marketing knowledge, Virginia is building a large affiliate-marketing site that will resell another company's products for commission sales. Turning her past work knowledge into a coaching model, Virginia is also building a website, WorkMadeEasier.com, to provide tips and tools that help make other people's work easier.

## **Laid Off as an Event Manager**

Vicki was laid off from her full time position, as an Event Manager, 14 months ago. Concerned about the lack of jobs in her city, and with no responses to her many job applications, she decided to take matters in to her own hands. Vicki had a household to support and a daughter in college, so needed to earn a wage.

She looked at growing businesses in the area, and noted that two of them, cleaning services and elder home care, required little advance education. Vicki decided to start a cleaning service company, but exploited a new niche, trying to attract the environmentally aware consumer. TopGreenCleaning.com was born, providing natural, "green" cleaning services, to a high standard. After a few months of networking and an advertising campaign, Top Green Cleaning attracted several business and residential clients. One year later, Vicki now employs 5 part-time cleaning staff, and services over 25 regular clients. Her two websites bring her a steady stream of leads from people searching for alternative, environmentally healthy cleaning services.

## **The Team Builder's Passion**

Pat worked in sales for over 20 years, putting all of his talent and effort into generating income for a large corporation. Five years ago, Pat realized that what he really loved to do was organize team-building games. With a partner, he formed Team Dynamix (WorkTeamFun.com) to create and organize corporate team-building exercises. Currently, Pat employs freelance event managers and facilitators, and barely a day goes without him leading a team event. He took the risk of leaving the corporate lifestyle, and is now paid to do something he loves. Pat's business had steadily grown throughout the economic downturn.



## **A Writer is Born**

Martyn, after many years working in farming, construction, and retail, bought a house in the Greek countryside and hoped to open up a hostel. Due to bureaucracy and diminishing funds, this never happened, and he needed a way to make a living, that did not require fluency in Greek.

He had always dabbled in writing, since his days of being a student, and decided to become a freelance writer. Gradually, he built up an international client base via the internet and is learning new skills in web marketing along the way.

Now, Martyn has his own website, [Freelance-WriterEditor.com](http://Freelance-WriterEditor.com), and has developed a reputation as an experienced academic and technical writer; he now mentors novice writers. As well as writing for pay, Martyn is currently writing a series of scientific resource books and a history book about his local area.

## **Anything is Possible – Only You Can Make It Happen**

As you can see, all of these cases, for whatever reason, had a dream and, through choice or situation, decided to follow through. All of them were prepared to work hard, learn new skills and, most importantly, understood that providing quality is the surest way to build up a core customer base.

Vicki saw a niche in the market and exploited it, while Pat turned what he loved into a profession. Virginia went through a period of learning and improving her skills, while Martyn uncovered a talent he already had but never knew about.

These four people are absolutely no different than you – they are no cleverer, luckier or better educated. They are regular people who took that first step and are now realizing the pleasure of self employment. Most importantly, setting up your own business does not necessarily mean investing money – the only major investment for becoming a freelance writer, web designer, marketer, or cleaning company owner, is time and effort. If you are prepared to invest these, then you can be successful.