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Job Compass Introduction

In order to be successful working from home however, you need to **fully commit** to the process of securing and completing home based assignments and projects.

If you approach your work at home job search as a spare time hobby, instead of handling it with professionalism like you would an in-house position or a regular full time job, it's unlikely that you are going to be dedicated enough to stick to the process, much less be consistently successful with the positions that you accept.

To be honest, working at home is very rewarding yet extremely challenging. You are responsible for completing tasks, staying on schedule and making sure that you fulfill client requests and obligations on time.

With no supervisor or boss looking over your shoulder, being a successful telecommuter requires strict discipline and dedication.

Another important element to becoming a successful freelancer is in being able to **quickly adapt to changes in the industry.**

You need to be able to instantly shift gears and change your format in order to stay competitive (if you are creating your own client lists) or to be able to cater to your online employers need for reoccurring change in direction.

The methods that we use to complete our projects, the format that we use as a foundation, and even the methods of communicating with our clients or employers is constantly changing, and in order to remain in demand, you will

need to be able to keep the pace, and modify your business plan whenever required.

Throughout the years, I've experienced incredible high's and dramatic low's. There were times when I couldn't keep up with client projects and other times where I was struggling to find enough work to maintain my business.

When it comes to freelancing, stability doesn't always come with the territory, and so by creating a solid action plan that will enable you to consistently make money, and by always focusing on staying competitive and growing your business, you will be able to get through any temporary downtimes that you may encounter (and we all experience this at one time or another).

As a **telecommuter**, you are typically considered a work at home **employee** for a company or online business. This means, that you are often required to follow specific schedules and meet pre-determined deadlines.

Quite often, the company that you work for covers a portion of your operational costs such as Internet connection or office equipment.

As a **freelancer**, you are working for yourself, finding your own clients, setting your own schedules and developing your own business structure.

You would be responsible for all associated costs, as well as in claiming all relevant tax deductions from running your own home based business.

When it comes to work at home jobs, where you are a paid telecommuter working for companies and clients, you can generate revenue from content development, website development and creation, as well as by offering services,

such as search engine optimization, marketing, and even working as a virtual assistant.

This is where people get confused, because while there are stark differences in the way that you perform your tasks as either a freelancer or telecommuter (based on structuring schedules, communicating with employers or clients, etc), the opportunities themselves, are often relatively similar, including positions in data entry, transcription work, typist, virtual secretary, marketer or researcher.

Online Work Options

Let's take a closer look at just a few of the ways that you can begin to carve out your online career.

Virtual Assistant

Virtual assistants are a necessity for large businesses outsourcing work who need extra 'hands on deck' to complete daily tasks and projects.

For the most part, virtual assistants are responsible for handling telephone calls relating to the company, setting up appointments, handling projects, managing task lists and quite often, are even responsible for website maintenance .

If you are thinking about getting into virtual assistant work keep in mind that the more skills and experience that you have the better your chances will be of getting a good job. You may want to take a course or work to receive certification in relevant fields to increase your qualifications and chances of landing the highest paying opportunities.

As a virtual assistant you'll need to be comfortable completing various clerical and administrative tasks without constant supervision.

Producing excellent work results will keep clients coming your way. A consistent flow of clients allows you to grow your work from home business and create some stability.

There are necessary tools to make your virtual assistant career excel. A stable highspeed Internet connection, reliable computer, quiet office space, standard phone line, and an all in one printer will provide you with a good start for this work from home business.

Being able to organized work tasks is another major component to the success of your virtual assistance career. Depending on the clients you choose to work with, there may be tons of tasks for you to complete.

Once you've been hired, the client expects you to produce accurate work at the scheduled deadline. Prioritizing everything will almost guarantee that you finish in time without forgetting something important.

As a virtual assistant, you're responsible for the upkeep of your business equipment. A client won't be responsible for providing you with all of the needed equipment to do your job. They expect you to be fully prepared to handle their challenging duties promptly.

Here are a few resources to help you get started:

<http://www.BaseJobs.cm>

<http://www.VirtualAssistants.com>

<http://www.WorkCircle.com>

Training:

<http://www.VAClassroom.com>

Websites such as [Job Volume](#) or [Personal Assistants](#) include multiple listings for Personal Assistant positions in a variety of locations.

Freelance Writing

To be a successful freelance writer, you will need a solid resume and a strong, professional portfolio. Your portfolio is the most important aspect of getting work, so take some time and concentrate on making yours shine.

A portfolio is a sample collection of your published and private works that potential employers or contractors can review when deciding if they would like you to work on their project.

Your portfolio is not the only part of the picture though – you need a strong resume as well. Not every employer or contractor will ask for a resume or work experience, but some may.

In any event, it is a good idea to have your writing experience written on a resume so that you can easily refer to it when needed.

On your resume, concentrate on any writing experience that you have. If you've been to college, mention any writing intensive courses that you have taken. Perhaps you have written a thesis, include a synopsis of that.

List any writing responsibilities that you have had in previous employment.

When it comes to gaining experience as a freelancer, you can start off accepting low cost projects, and gradually work your way up. You will need to showcase your talents and build a loyal customer base, before you will be able to generate a full time income as a freelance writing specialist.

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Here are a few resources that will help you gain experience and begin to develop your online freelance business:

www.textbroker.com – You join the site and submit a writing sample, which they will “grade”. You can then select assignments based upon your grade. Assignments are articles on various topics, with pay usually around a few dollars for 100-500 words.

www.mturk.com – On this site, sponsored by Amazon.com, you can select “hits” and complete articles on specific topics for pre-set amounts of money. Articles are usually paid a few dollars for a few hundred words. There are also online writing courses offered if that has more of an appeal for you, check out:

<http://www.writersonlineworkshops.com/retail/>

<http://www.lifewrite.com/html/class.htm>

It will also help to join a community of writers, either through an email list or online forum.

Take some time to read through posts, introduce yourself, and get to know others. Not only will this help with your writing, but you will also improve your networking skills. Some forums for writers include:

www.writingforums.org

<http://forums.writersbeat.com>

www.accentuateservices.com/xmb

www.thewritingforum.net

You should also familiarize yourself with some general freelance writing websites. These sites are a good resource if you want to do some research or run into questions regarding your freelance writing:

www.freelancewriting.com

www.absolutewrite.com

www.worldwidefreelance.com

<http://writing-journey.com>

<http://freelancewrite.about.com>

www.writersweekly.com

www.aboutfreelancewriting.com

When you are practicing your writing, make sure you take time to truly review and critique your work.

Revisit samples of your work from time to time to re-read and re-vamp your practice writings. As you become a more accomplished and experienced writer, your writing will vastly improve, so you can always make corrections and updates to your work.

Tips To Getting Started

Here are a few tips to help you get started as a professional freelancer:

TIP ONE: Offer More Value For Less

One of the best ways to stand out from your competition is to offer more value than your competitors. There are many ways to do this; it just takes a little creative thinking.

If you can't compete on price, then you have to go the extra mile and do things your competitors don't do.

Make your service look like it's 10 times better than that of your nearest competitors by offering additional value at no extra cost. These special incentives don't have to take up a lot of your time either. For example, offer the project in various formats, or offer to customize the document by including your clients name or website URL.

Here are a few ways to offer more value:

- Offer one free article for every 10 ordered.
- Offer HTML formatting for those who need it, at no extra charge.
- Offer PDF export at no additional charge.
- Offer to add images at no extra charge.
- Add formatting like table of contents for free with book writing.
- If you're a designer, include free graphics.

TIP TWO: Have a USP (Unique Selling Point)

Every business needs a unique selling point if they hope to be successful. Your unique selling point is something you offer that absolutely no one else offers.

Your USP should be something that really makes you stand out amongst your competitors. It should be either unique to you, if at all possible. This could be almost anything, but ideally it should be related to the market you're looking to work in.

Let's look at some examples of USPs for freelance writers:

- College degrees, especially in certain areas. For example, if you have a degree in nursing, this would be extremely helpful to people who need medical articles written!
- Professional experience. If you are a former veterinarian, you have a distinct advantage for someone who is looking to have pet care articles written.
- Journalism experience. If you have written for newspapers or magazines, this could set you apart. This would be especially helpful if, for example, you wrote full-time for a gardening magazine for ten years and someone was looking for gardening articles.
- Bilingual. If you write fluently in more than one language, this could be a huge selling point! Many people need articles in other languages, but it

can be very difficult to find someone who is fluent enough in both English and the other language to perform such a task.

- Affiliations. If you are affiliated with a certain group, you could have a very good advantage when it comes to writing articles for others in that group.

TIP THREE: Have Confidence In Yourself

When you're selling a service, you're not really selling what you DO; you're selling who you ARE.

The more confidence you have in yourself, the more others will believe in you. If you think you're the best, you'll be able to convince others you are, too!

TIP FOUR: Offer Phenomenal Service

Freelance writing is a service business, and the best way to get repeat business is to offer absolutely exceptional service.

There are many ways to be certain you're offering the best service possible.

- Offer a revision or two at no extra cost.
- Answer emails very promptly.
- Complete work AHEAD of schedule.
- If you think you can complete a job in two days, tell the client it will take four. When you finish it in two, he'll be thrilled!
- Offer volume discounts.
- Be extremely friendly.

- Be patient with excessive questions.
- Be polite, even when a client is rude.
- If you spot mistakes on your part, fix them BEFORE the client notices.

TIP FIVE: Communicate Regularly

One thing clients hate more than anything is being kept in the dark. When they've trusted their time, business, and money to someone, they want to feel assured that they've made the right decision.

When you keep in touch with a client, they'll know you haven't skipped town. They'll feel better that you're hard at work on their project and you aren't sunning yourself on the beach while they're waiting for their projects to be delivered.

If you're running behind schedule, don't be afraid to tell the client this. Do so BEFORE they ask, if possible. Most clients will understand, unless they have a very strict deadline. In this case, be prepared to offer a refund. Otherwise, as long as you stay in touch, most people will understand.

TIP SIX: Ask for Testimonials

Testimonials are a form of "social proof". When you have testimonials, you seem more trustworthy. This is especially true when you have testimonials from people who are well-known or highly-respected in the field you're working in.

If possible, get a picture and a URL you can include with each testimonial. This helps people believe your testimonials are real, especially when they can contact the person who gave it.

TIP SEVEN: Encourage Repeat Business

Repeat business is the lifeblood of almost any business. It costs a lot more to acquire a new customer than it does to retain an old one.

There are many things you can do to encourage people to keep returning to you for more work.

- Build a mailing list and send them regular mailings.
- Send your list special discount offers periodically.
- Offer special deals to regular clients.
- Give discounts for each milestone, such as 50, 100, and 200 pages ordered.
- Have a customer loyalty program, offering coupons or prizes to people who order regularly.
- Offer free work whenever you screw up. If you're late or make huge mistakes, give the client a major freebie.

TIP EIGHT: Offer Volume Discounts

It may seem counterintuitive to offer discounts when someone orders a lot from you. After all, it's more work, right? But these big orders might be where the bulk of your income comes from.

You need to offer these, so it's best to actually price yourself a bit higher than you really want to be paid. If the lowest you ever want to accept per page is \$12, price yourself at \$15 or \$20. Then you can offer discounts to people who order a lot.

Start your discounts out at a relatively low number. The main thing you're looking to do is discourage people from ordering just one article at a time.

You'll have contact time spent with every client, but this is minimized if you can do several articles for the same client. It's much better to get larger orders than order for just one or two pages.

If your lowest price will be \$12 per page, your scale might work like this:

- 1-4 articles are \$20 each.
- 5-9 articles are \$18 each.
- 10-19 articles are \$16 each.
- 20-29 articles are \$14 each.
- 30 or more articles are \$12 each.

TIP NINE: Encourage Referrals

If you want to make more money, your business needs to grow. The best way to get it to grow is to have your current customers refer others. Some people will do this on their own, but many won't.

Some people will want to keep you all to themselves, fearing you'll become too busy to work for them when they need you. Others are just forgetful, or thoughtless, or even just rude. But many people will refer others if they're given an incentive to.

Incentives might include free articles, a percentage in cash (like an affiliate program), or other bonuses. You might give the client 1 page free for every 10

pages anyone they refer orders. This would not only encourage them to refer others, but also to refer those who might order in volume.

TIP TEN: Become Invaluable

The best way to make more money from your freelance writing is to become irreplaceable and absolutely invaluable to your clients. You need to make sure they keep coming back over and over by giving them exactly what they want at a price they can afford.

You should be consistently striving for the fastest turnaround time, the friendliest service, and the best prices you can possibly offer without selling yourself short.

You should NEVER under-price yourself severely. This will just burn you out and harm your business. Price your service reasonably, and fairly.

Finding Online Work

Here are the top methods of finding and securing high paying freelance opportunities:

Freelance Marketplaces

Make sure that any profiles you set up or samples of work that you send are exceptionally strong. Bid knowledgeably – research what a fair price for the work would be and bid near that.

www.elance.com – This site allows you to bid on a large variety of work, anything from article writing to copy. The writer is able to see a likely budget for the project, as well as how many other writers have placed a bid on the work. After you have completed work, you will receive a rating.

Make sure that the work you submit for payment is of high quality, so your rating will remain high. The higher your rating and quality, the more likely you will receive higher payments for your work.

www.guru.com – This site is similar to Elance. Create a profile, search for work, place a bid and complete any bid that you are awarded. Be sure that any work you submit is of high quality.

www.getafreelancer.com – Do a thorough search on this site to sift through open projects that may fit your skills.

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www.ifreelance.com – Check under “Provider Services” to create a profile and bid on projects.

www.scriptlance.com – Search carefully through this site for “writing” as many of the projects listed are programming related.

www.writingbids.com – On this site you can bid from anything ranging from books to resume writing; projects are taken from other bid sites and listed in this central location.

www.project4hire.com – Project for hire lists many different freelance projects, to bid you must register on their site.

www.totalfreelance.com – Total Freelance is another site where you can register to bid on freelance work.

www.writerlance.com – Register with Writer Lance to be able to bid on projects for freelance writers.

Here are other popular freelance opportunities available online:

www.associatedcontent.com – With Associated Content you post your own original work, and you receive a portion of money based upon how popular your article is and how much traffic you receive.

www.helium.com – Helium is similar to Associated Content, in that you post your own work and receive payment based upon how much traffic your article receives.

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www.constantcontent.com – Using this site, you post your own original works and sell it outright for a set price.

www.suite101.com – With this site, you can post your own content and earn income on your writing based upon the popularity of your article.

When you apply for this work pay particular attention to responding as the employer specifies – you may need to submit a resume, portfolio, or samples of your work.

www.freelancewritinggigs.com – This site is a compilation of blogs, some of which post job leads.

<http://jobs.problogger.net> – A site geared towards job postings for Bloggers.

www.poewar.com – Navigate through to the freelance writing jobs, where you will find jobs compiled from many sources in one easy to view screen.

<http://bloggerjobs.biz> - Another site with a large listing of freelance blogging jobs.

www.mediabistro.com – Narrow your search on this job listing site by checking “freelance” to obtain only the listings that are freelance based.

<http://jobs.freelanceswitch.com> – This site includes a large listing of freelance writing job posting.

<http://journalismjobs.com/> - Under “Opportunities”, narrow your search down to just freelance writing jobs. There are plenty of opportunities on this site to view.

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<http://allfreelancewritingjobs.com> – This blog provides weekly links to several job leads. You can also view previously posted jobs and apply to those as well.

<http://www.wahm.com/jobs.html> – This work at home forum lists many job openings; search through the listings to find those for freelance writers.

<http://www.online-writing-jobs.com/> - This site also offers freelance writing job listings.

www.sologig.com – Under “Browse by Categories” select “creative”, and you will find a few writing jobs, and many freelance copywriting jobs.

www.gofreelance.com – Go Freelance allows you to search by category – select “writing” and view listing for freelance writing.

www.freelancefree.com – A free site to register and find freelance work.

www.lancepost.com - Lancepost lists a feed of new job leads, sift through to find leads for freelance writing.

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