How to Raise Your Freelancing Rates

As a freelancer, it’s easy to underestimate yourself and get trapped in low-paying work.

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When you start out in your freelancing career, you may find yourself working for quite low rates. How low this rate will be will, of course, vary between careers and industries. If you’re entering a highly competitive industry like writing and you don’t have an impressive portfolio of work and clients to show off, then you can expect to work for less-than-ideal rates at the beginning. However, as you gain experience, sharpen your skills and build your portfolio, this should translate into a higher rate. One of the struggles of freelancing, though, is ascertaining the pay that you deserve.

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It’s easy to underestimate yourself and get trapped in low-paying work. If you want to excel and grow in your freelancing career, then you need to learn the vital skill of raising your rates. Failure to do this can land you in a stagnant and unpleasant state of stress and overwork. Luckily, sometimes all it takes to avoid this scenario is sending a simple but tactfully constructed email to an existing client.

Know the value of your work

Part of the resistance in asking for a higher rate — whether

from an existing client or a new one – is a lack of confidence in one's abilities. Of course, it's understandable to think that whatever you're getting paid reflects your abilities because that's the advertised rate or the rate you initially agreed to be paid. Nevertheless, over time and with persistence your skills will improve, which will translate into higher quality work and results for your client. For all the extra time, effort and attention you put into your work, you absolutely deserve a higher rate.

So before deciding to craft that email asking for a higher rate, you first have to realize how the value of your work increases over time. Having this confidence in your abilities will allow you to negotiate the rate you deserve at the time when you deserve it. Freelance writer Elna Cain argues that fellow writers shouldn't be afraid to aim high when raising their rate. A 50 percent increase could be well-justified.

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And if you struggle with a critical inner voice (as we all do) telling you that you're not good enough, learn some techniques to silence this inner critic.

Don't negotiate too early

Timing is also crucial when you're negotiating a higher rate. Say you started working for a client three months ago, at a low rate. You've been performing well, consistently meeting deadlines, being prompt in your communications and satisfying the client's needs and expectations. On the other hand, three months is perhaps too short a time frame in which to hone your skills in a way that allows you to *exceed* the client's expectations for success.

Impatience may make you want to ask for a higher rate earlier than when you are in the best position to make your case for it. Becoming proficient at whatever it is that you do is a

gradual process and involves years of commitment.

Having said that, if you've been working regularly for a client for 6 months or up to a year, then – assuming you've also been focused on learning from mistakes and gaining new knowledge – you should be producing higher quality work.

This applies to submitting your rates to potentially new clients as well. If you want to ask for a higher rate than what you've normally been earning, then you need to show the very best examples of your current output. In order to do this, make sure your freelance portfolio is professional and up-to-date.

Showing evidence in your email

It can be a bit nerve-racking when you decide to bite the bullet and send an email to an existing client asking for a higher rate. You may fear that this email could risk you losing that client and, therefore, a stable source of income. Yet part of developing your freelance career involves overcoming this fear and taking certain risks in order to reap the rewards.

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When asking for a higher rate, you want to offer some reasons why your client should agree to it. If you're a writer, for instance, this may include the extra time you put into your research, SEO, editing and social media sharing. In your email, you could cite evidence of how your content is garnering more web traffic, subscribers, profits, downloads and activity on social media, as well as better Google rankings. You can also point to recent work that highlights your improved research skills and ability to create clean, useful and engaging content that perfectly matches the client's needs in terms of style, tone,\ and voice.

A final tip is to always exceed your deadlines, as this is a sure fire way to leave a good impression with your client and make you stand out. It’s important to simultaneously make a well-evidenced case for your higher rate and put in the hard work so that your client isn’t surprised when you ask for a raise.

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