

Freelancing and outsourced marketing

Freelancing is not for sissies - particularly not at the moment, where the market is awash with creatives who became involuntary freelancers following last year's redundancies. In 2010, the fittest WILL survive - and thrive - and clients can take their pick from a seriously talented pool of creatives who will be upping their games to get an edge over the competition.

 By [Jo Duxbury](#) 28 Jan 2010



1. There will be plenty of work:

2009 was a wonderful year for some freelancers, and a terrible year for others. Those who had more work than they know what to do were generally those with online skills: web design, development, online content generation and writing. This reflects the global move away from printed marketing materials to more measurable, affordable online media.

In 2010, as the economy recovers and as South Africa in particular gets a huge boost from the 2010 FIFA World Cup, I expect that companies will relook at print media, and graphic designers, DTP operators, etc. will find there's more work out there again. But they should still consider diversifying...

2. Freelancers will learn new skills - or team up:

Having said that traditional media will make a bit of a comeback, it's likely that freelancers who had a lean year in 2010 will likely retrain, adding an online element to their skillsets. Already I've seen graphic designers learn Flash or basic web development; and some writers have been swotting up on what makes good online copy.

Without becoming jacks of all trades, savvy freelancers will assess how they can add an online element to their existing range of services - or they'll find a fellow freelancer who offers complementary skills and team up to secure more projects.

3. Better bandwidth will enable better remote working:

While many freelancers already work with clients whom they've never met in person, as South Africa's bandwidth improves and prices fall, remote working will become easier and more popular.

In my business, conference calls are always held on Skype (have you seen what Telkom charges for one?!) and we often use it to share and transfer files too.

South African clients are still a little apprehensive about working remotely with freelancers, but

international clients are generally quite used to it - and better connectivity can only mean more opportunities for SA freelancers, nationally and globally.

4. OMM will become a real alternative to the agency/freelancer choice:

In 2009 we saw something new start to emerge - an alternative to using an agency or a freelancer: outsourced marketing management (OMM). Under this model, clients contract in a senior marketing strategist, who becomes their virtual marketing manager. That person then subcontracts to their network of freelancers or small companies to help roll out the marketing strategy - eg designers, writers, web developers, SEO consultants, etc.

Freelancers need to know who these strategists are in order to get referred work. The client wins with this model as it's more affordable and flexible than retaining an agency; and they don't need to hunt for a brief and manage the freelancers (many clients wouldn't know where to start).

Driven by demand for this service, my own company has just launched a new division, Peppermint Source, to provide this sort of service to clients who don't have in-house marketing managers - and all signs indicate that OMM will become a very popular offering in 2010 and beyond.

5. Freelancers will get tough:

Sadly, many freelancers were left high and dry, with invoices overdue or unpaid, as their clients went under in 2009. In 2010, it's likely that we'll see freelancers toughening up about payment terms to ensure they're not left exposed.

I expect to see freelancers becoming more professional in how they estimate, invoice and contract with clients - even investing in financial management courses to help them get a better handle on their cash flows. They'll be more firm about up-front deposits and milestone-based payments, reducing risk by ensuring that the last stage payment for a project is a small one.

6. Measurement will give you an edge:

Clients are still spending on marketing, but they're much more prudent about it and want to see results. So, to get ahead in 2010, freelancers need to add metrics and useful reports to their services. Clients want to know whether their investment is working, so freelancers who come up with innovative ways of measuring this will find themselves very popular.

7. Freelancers will use social media socially, not professionally:

Sure, having an online profile is important as it helps a freelancer's credibility - but using it as a tool to find clients? Hmm. There's a huge pool of potential clients out there who think that tweeting is something birds do, so savvy freelancers will be building their reputations on a variety of media, not just Twitter and Facebook.

While social media can be great for combating freelancer loneliness and connecting with other freelancers, it can be very distracting. In 2010, I expect that freelancers will rein in their social media usage to increase productivity, limiting their use of it to the purely social, with a little peer networking thrown in.

8. Excellent service, top talent and professionalism are keys to survival:

As the economy improves, many people who were forced into freelancing last year will happily return the safety of a monthly salary, but some will stick with the freedoms that freelance life offers.

With a large number of freelancers to choose from, clients can be picky, and demanding.

Those who survive - and flourish - will be the ones who offer superior talent, professionalism and, importantly, customer service. Be a pleasure to deal with, do a great job, and communicate well - and you will already be streaks ahead of the crowd.

ABOUT JO DUXBURY

Jo Duxbury has been providing a platform for marketers to find over 4500 industry freelancers since she launched her company, Freelancentral, in early 2006. In January 2010 she launched Peppermint Source, which offers a full outsourced marketing management service to companies who don't have the time, skills or staff to do their marketing themselves. Follow Jo's blog or her tweets on Twitter.
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