

# Finding unity in the freelance community

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Freedom to work on what we want, setting our own working hours, flexibility of working from anywhere and being able to take long-lazy lunches. Sounds like the freelance dream, right?



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Freelancing has many benefits, but it can also be a lonely way to work. And it's not all easy breezy all of the time. In fact, it's usually far from that - especially when you first start out.

Ask any freelancer, and they'll probably confirm that they've had a few (if not all) of the below thoughts (many times):

- 'I can't do this - why did I say yes to this job?'
- 'Maybe I should try to get a full time job again?'
- 'I don't think I'm cut out for this life - it's too stressful.'
- 'This is awesome, I'm killing it out here!'

So often, we're stuck in our own heads, not having anyone to talk to about our jobs.

Since we don't have office colleagues, we have to work a bit harder to build a community around us. Sure, we have our clients that we can interact with, but sometimes these relationships are short-lived and sporadic. And it's not quite the same as talking to someone who is going through the same things as you are.

This is where the benefits of a freelancer community comes in.

## **Why communities matter**

Freelancing can be an extremely competitive space. The industry is expanding as more and more people seek the 'freedom' that comes with the lifestyle (or, were forced to after a hard 2020).

So, why would you want to form a community with your competitors?

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, feelings of belonging and love are critical to motivating human behaviour. We have a psychological need to feel connected to other people. As humans, we've evolved to become dependent on each other for survival. This is especially important for freelancers, where there's a whole world of collaboration opportunities.

We need to let go of the whole 'it's a dog-eat-dog world' concept. It really doesn't have to be and building a solid community of freelancers can actually be your greatest asset.

There is always unity in a community!

## **Benefits of a freelance community**

Ultimately, all the benefits of freelance communities boil down to a simple theme: not feeling so alone.

One of the biggest adjustments of becoming a freelancer is the lack of support. Which is the main reason that so many freelancer communities have popped up. The best ones are built on providing support. Whether that's emotional, practical, in-person or virtual.

There's a few other benefits, including:

### **1. Tackling your feelings of isolation**

As a freelancer, you spend the majority of your time working alone. Whether it's in your home office, in a coffee shop or next to the beach (#LivingtheDream) - it's likely just you and your laptop.

Sure, there're benefits to your productivity levels, but it can also mean an overwhelming feeling of loneliness. Fighting the feelings of isolation is something that the whole world has caught onto in 2020, as more than just the freelancers were sent to work from home.

If not tackled, feelings of isolation can very quickly lead to depression and anxiety. A strong freelance community can help to battle these feelings of social isolation.

### **2. Guidance from those in the know**

This is particularly useful for newbie freelancers. When you start freelancing, you suddenly have to know a lot more than your dedicated craft. You're essentially a small business and need to quickly learn a bunch of new skills - from marketing to accounting, tax and project management.

Sure, you can probably find answers to all of your questions on the internet. But, that can be really overwhelming.

Having a community of other freelancers that you can ask for guidance, advice and critique is hugely beneficial. Not only can it save you loads of time but will probably send you down a more successful path than if you had to figure it out on your own.

### **3. Providing a network of collaborators**

You don't have to be alone as a freelancer. And you definitely don't have to do 'all the jobs' yourself. Joining a freelance community opens up a whole new world of collaboration opportunities.

Perhaps you're a freelance graphic designer, have you ever thought about collaborating with a web designer or copywriter? It's likely that you all share a lot of the same clients, so why not work together?

When you have your network of fellow freelancers on hand, you'll be able to pull in additional resources that some jobs might require.

### **4. Landing you new gigs**

Did you think that building a community of freelancers would actually mean less work for you? The opposite is true.

A freelance community can actually help you land a bunch of new gigs. For example, you may come across opportunities from other freelancers in your field that don't have the capacity to do certain jobs. And, at the same time, you might be able to recommend other freelancers to clients when you don't have the capacity or the required skills.

Having a large and strong network as a freelancer is never a bad thing.

### **5. A place to share your worries, stresses and wins**

Struggling with a difficult client. Unsure of how to approach a tricky issue on a project. Fighting to get your invoices paid on time. Or starting to panic as you haven't landed any new jobs for a few weeks...

Or, you've just landed your dream client, received awesome feedback on a job or hit your yearly income goals early.

These are all moments when you need a group of people in the same boat as you that you can commiserate with, rant with and share your successes with. They understand what you're going through and will be there to rant right along with you, cheer you on from the sidelines, and celebrate your wins like no one else!

#### **Different kinds of freelance communities**

Freelance communities can take many forms, from virtual networks to coworking spaces. Luckily for freelancers, they get to choose what works best for them.

Co-working spaces are great for offering that office-esque community feel. Where you're regularly going into the same space to work and have the opportunity to physically interact with other freelancers. It's a great way to 'fill up your cup' (in the energy sense) with casual banter, water-cooler discussions and networking opportunities.

If you aren't a fan of co-working spaces, then there's plenty of virtual communities that foster collaboration and support. From Facebook groups to virtual freelancer networks, Slack groups and niche communities (like digital nomad groups and copywriter collectives).

## **A community is a circle of support**

Remember that old saying that says, 'what goes around, comes around'? It's the same here, if you support the freelance community, they will support you.

While the freelancing pool is expanding, it's still a shockingly small world. We're all in it together, so instead of side-eying your competitors rather join them. You're going to get so much more out of it. After all, there's always unity in a community.

If you need help with connecting with other freelancers, we're happy to help.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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