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# Freelancing FOR DUMMIES®



**Susan M. Drake**  
Successful freelance writer  
and business consultant

***A Reference for the Rest of Us!™***

# ***Freelancing For Dummies***

**by Susan M. Drake**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

## **Freelancing For Dummies®**

Published by

**Wiley Publishing, Inc.**

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

[www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

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Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2001089292

ISBN: 0-7645-5369-0

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

10/TR/QV/QR/IN



# About the Author

**Susan M. Drake**, who lives and works in Memphis, TN, is the founder and president of Spellbinders, Inc., a marketing and corporate-communications company. She and her associates are dedicated to the proposition that you can have fun while making clients' lives easier and their businesses more profitable. Susan has been a communications professional for 20 years, and she enjoys the freedom and diverse assignments that self-employment allow. Her clients hire her to provide communications counsel, plan corporate meetings, write speeches, design marketing plans, and generally assist them to do anything from difficult to all-but-impossible jobs. Spellbinders' hallmark is nonconformist solutions that absolutely work. Susan has received multiple awards from both the International Association of Business Communicators and the Public Relations Society of America.

She also enjoys writing books, going to the theater, ballroom dancing, and most of all, attending Rolling Stones' concerts.

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# Dedication

When I was a young, unemployed person with nothing but a journalism degree, a woman named Mike Ballard gave me a job. I was a divorced mother with no experience (except for six months I spent cutting fabric part-time at Cloth World), and I applied for a public relations job at Holiday Inns, Incorporated. I had no concept of what I would be expected to do, nor how I would do it, but I was sure I could do the job. I asked Mike to trust me, and she did. Because of her, I have a career. I don't know where Mike is today, but I send my fondest wishes to her for what she gave me.

I also dedicate this book to Paula Kovarik, the consummate freelancer. I aspire to her level of integrity and talent.

And finally, to my friends Denise Temofeew, Laura Derrington, and Don Morgan, who have taught me a lot about the most important things in life.

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to Tere Drenth, a smart, helpful, understanding, and fun editor.

Thanks to Karen Doran, who hired me for this project and who was always so gracious and kind.

Thank you to Renee Dingler, technical editor and outstanding friend.

Thanks to the Hungry Minds production staff, who make books look grand.

Thank you to Sheree Bykofsky, my wonderful agent.

Thank you to Susan Gross. I don't believe I can ever write a book without her.

And thank you to all the business people and freelancers who exist in this book either in name or in spirit: Colleen Wells, Scott Drake, Lauralee Dobbins, Laura Koss-Feder, Elise Mitchell, Helen Halladay, Jackie Nerren, Mr. Anonymous, Willy Taylor, Robin Thomas, David Rawlinson, Chris Crouch, Linda Delaney, John Snyder, Jody Pendergrast, J. D. Estes, Dusky Norsworthy, Bob Palmer, Ann Davis, Ed Iannarella, Norman Adcox, Sherry Henson, and Phil Schaeffgen. We are family.



# **Publisher's Acknowledgments**

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Online Registration Form located at [www.hungryminds.com](http://www.hungryminds.com)

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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## **Production**

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**Layout and Graphics:** Jackie Nicholas, Barry Offrings, Brian Torwelle, Julie Trippetti, Jeremey Unger

**Proofreaders:** Laura Albert, Laura L. Bowman, Nancy Price, Charles Spencer, TECHBOOKS Production Services

**Indexer:** TECHBOOKS Production Services

***Special Help***

Mark Butler, Senior Acquisitions Editor

**General and Administrative**

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**Hungry Minds Consumer Production:** Debbie Stailey,  
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# Introduction

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If you're thinking of going out on your own, chances are you're the type of person who likes to forge a new path. You have a lot of energy, and I suspect you put your all into the work you feel passionate about. You have places to go people to see, and things to do, which means you have to find the most efficient and effective way to do everything — and that includes your freelance practice.

This book is a good place to start. It combines the knowledge of a host of freelancers: an accountant, computer trainer, graphic designer, writer, desktop publisher, market researcher and personal services planner, medical transcriber, event planner, and more. Some of the freelancers who contributed to this book have been around a long time; others are more recent additions to the club. But all have tips to share.

## About This Book

When I embarked on the freelance trail, every day I felt as if I were making it up as I went along. Fortunately for you, you don't have to do that. You have this book! Read it, and you'll get a head start, avoid some drastic mistakes, and have a lot of fun.

This book helps you understand how to get your business started, jumpstart a business you've had for years, find

new clients, establish your rates, set up your office, keep your books, pay taxes, buy insurance, advertise your business, and more! Use it as a ready reference or as moral support.

## **Foolish Assumptions**

Because you've picked this book off the shelf, I assume you're a freelancer or thinking of becoming one. You may already have an area of specialty or you may have great skills and want to figure out how to market them. This book can help you focus your search for a freelance niche. In any case, I think you'll enjoy *Freelancing For Dummies*. By using this book, you can unearth new opportunities, set up your business, or just get support when times are lean. And if you're wavering in your resolve to jump into the freelance fray, this book reminds you why you thought this path was a good idea in the first place.

# How This Book Is Organized

When you're going into business for yourself, you need to become an expert at a lot of things in a very short time. This book tells you what you need to know about any and every facet of freelancing quickly and easily in six easy parts that cover every major area of starting and running your own freelancing business. The following is a summary of each part.

# **Part I: Getting Ready to Go It Alone**

Will you thrive in the freelance world? No crystal ball can predict your future, but you can look for signs to help you avoid unpleasant surprises. Before you redefine your life, start with the chapters in this part to see if you and freelancing are a good fit. This part helps you evaluate your strengths and weaknesses, identify viable freelance opportunities, and get ready to make your break from the corporate world.

# **Part II: Opening Your Doors for Business**

This part shares information on whether to incorporate, how to get business licenses, and how to find supportive experts who can help you with aspects of your business. It also describes what you'll need in the way of office equipment and suggests smart ways of organizing your time.

# **Part III: Bringing Your Work to Life**

This part helps you prepare to serve your clients' needs in the most efficient and effective way. It describes and offers tips on creating a professional image, creating demand for your services, finding and managing clients, evaluating jobs and projects, and staying current in your field.



# **Part IV: Managing Your Money**

Sure, the work is fulfilling, but you also want some financial rewards from your hard day's work. This part gives you tips for planning, budgeting, and accounting; tells you how to get paid; gives you guidelines for filing tax forms and buying insurance; and shares how to invest for the future.

# Part V: The Part of Tens

Like Mr. Blackwell's list of best and worst dressed, this part advises you how to look like the star that you are. The lists of ten in this part include ways to enjoy your new life, avoid stress, and satisfy clients.

## Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you can find little pictures in the margins. These pictures, called *icons*, alert you to quick snippets of information or stories that are particularly important or enlightening. The four following icons appear in this book:



This icon helps you find shortcuts that save you time, money, energy, and gray hair.



Tie a string around your finger to remind you of these very important points. If you don't take away anything else from this book, at least take these tips and tricks.



This icon introduces true-life adventures of people who have lived the freelance life. Read all about how successful freelancers handle touchy situations, build their businesses, and even decide that this life isn't for them.



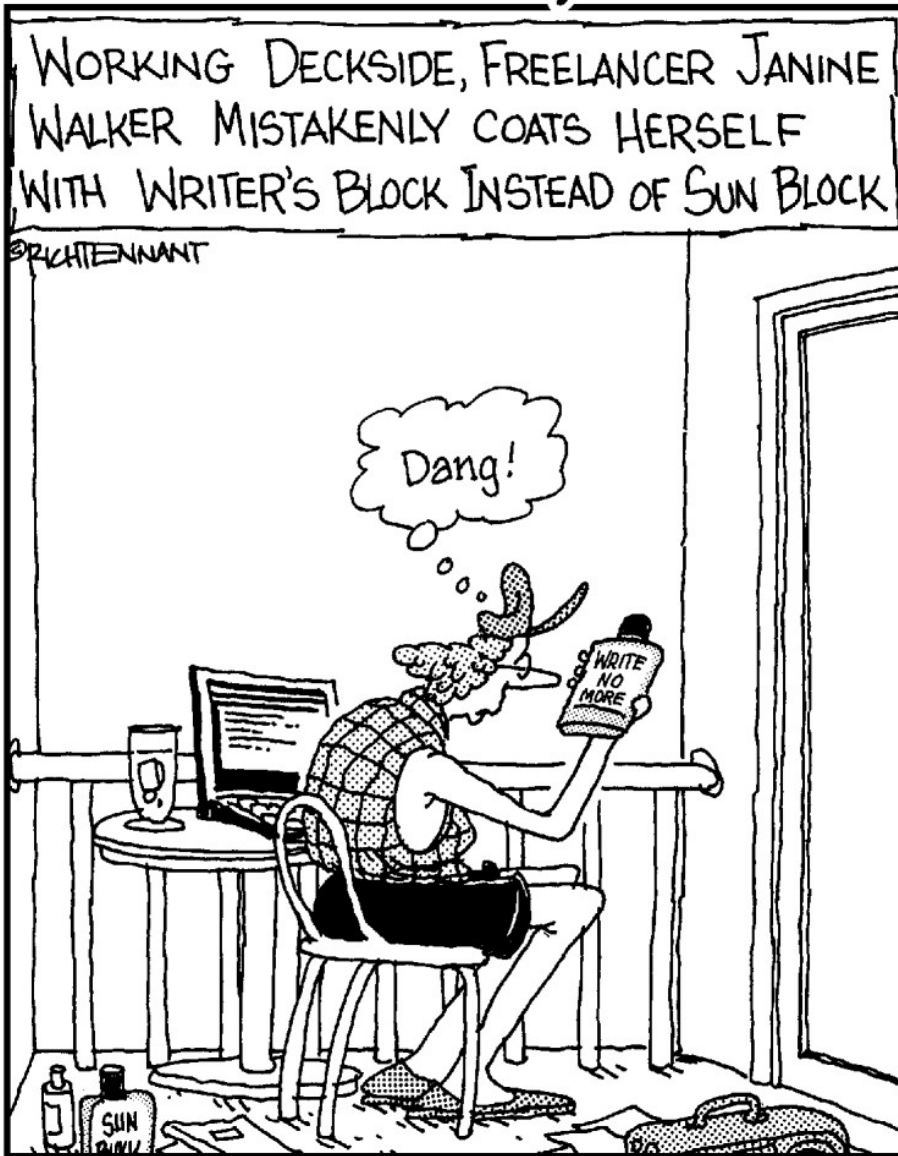
The freeway of freelancing can be a perilous road. Heed these icons to avoid collisions.

# Where to Go from Here

Whether you're embarking on your freelance journey or you're an old hand looking for straighter paths to follow, you can get there from here. Whether you start at the beginning and let *Freelancing For Dummies* give you a methodical process that guides you every step of the way, or pick and choose a few subjects from the Index or the Table of Contents, every chapter stands on its own and can answer your questions or soothe your fears.

**Part I**  
**Getting Ready to Go It  
Alone**

**The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave** By Rich Tennant



## **In this part . . .**

**B**efore you ride off into the sunset on your gallant steed, consider whether you're cut out for the freelance life and then take some steps to ensure your success.

This part describes the characteristics of a freelancer and gives pointers on how to ease your transition to the freelance life.

# Chapter 1

## Are You a Born Freelancer?

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Defining yourself as a free agent
  - ▶ Making sure your personality fits
  - ▶ Creating your own job description
  - ▶ Assessing your skills
- 

In times of old, knights traveled the countryside, hiring themselves out to fight battles on behalf of various kings and countries. These brave warriors carried weapons called lances. freelancers.

If you think you want to work for yourself, you'll probably discover that you're one of a growing number of brave hearts roaming the business world looking for Camelot. This chapter explores what makes a freelancer tick and helps you decide whether you want to join this merry band.

## **Describing the Footloose and Fancy Freelancer**