

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR FREELANCE TALENT

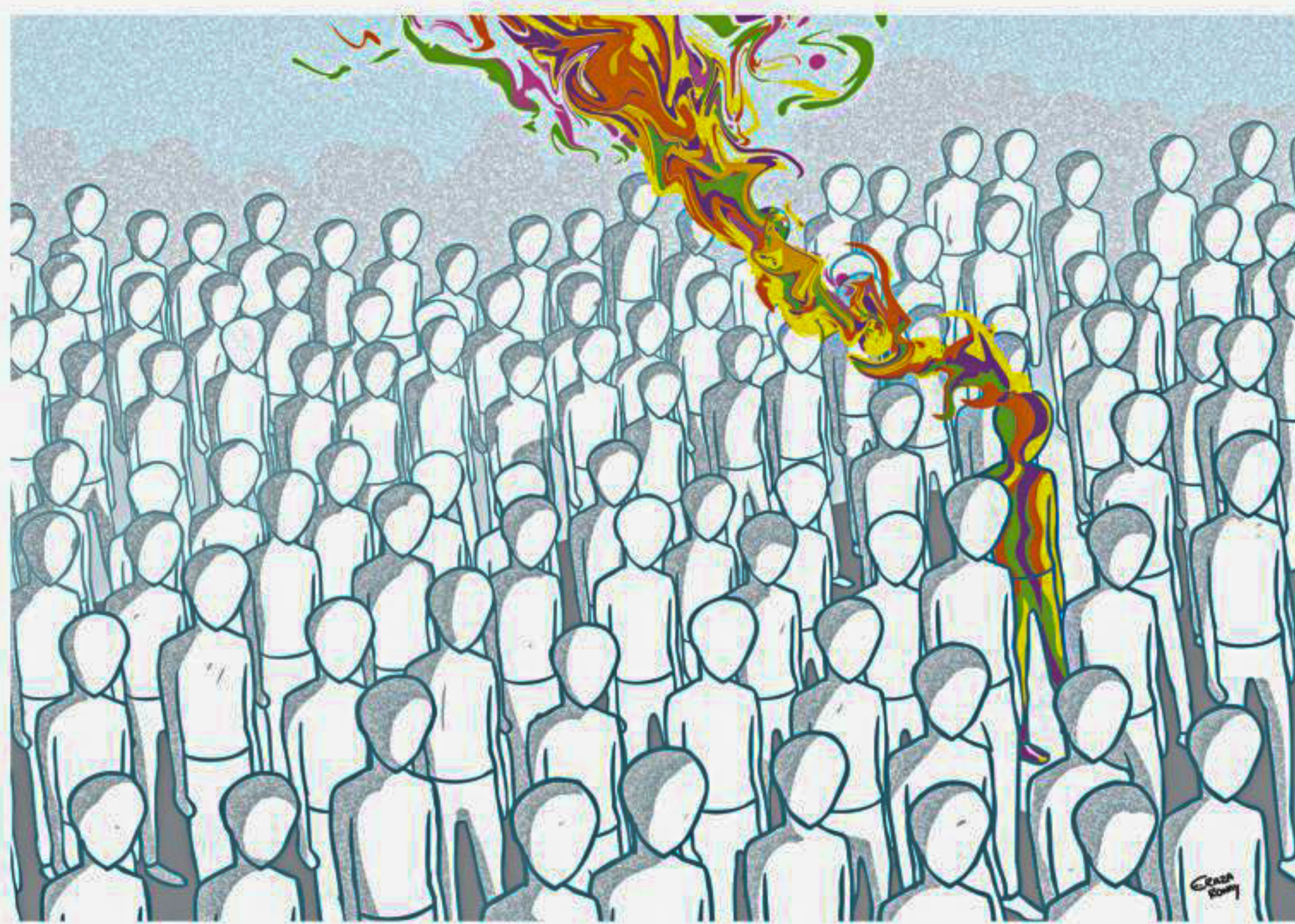


ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY

YOU'RE THE BOSSMAN'S NEW ASSISTANT? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DOG HE HIRED CAUSE IT WOULDN'T NEED TO BE PAID MUCH?

DOG WAS TOO FRIENDLY.



ER, OKAY, SO CAN I SEE THE BOSSMAN? WANT TO DISCUSS MY CONTRACT.



ER, SO..... LATER?



Sometimes an agency might be too expensive or they might be overkill for your marketing or branding activities. In such cases, people look towards freelancers for the work. However, there are so many horror stories from both sides of the camp that hiring freelance talent is always considered risky business. From my experience both as a client and as a freelancer, the problem is always in the brief. This article will mostly focus on copywriters and designers that form the backbone of your creative work but may be applicable in other areas as well.

Finding the freelancer

Facebook groups like DSD and DSE [Desperately Seeking Entrepreneurs, not the other one]. Have a lot of freelancers and small businesses in them. Just make a post and ask them to contact you, give them an idea of what sort of work you want and ask for quotations. With multiple quotations in hand, you will get a rough idea of what your budget should be like. Also, it never hurts to ask people in your network for creative professionals they might know.

You get what you pay for

The lowest bidder fetish is one that most of us cannot let go of and I have no qualms with that. Overheads must be kept low and if someone can do job X at less than half the price, how can we possibly say no, especially in a market where people are good at convincing but rarely good at delivering. In such cases, always ask for the portfolio and see if their designs are consistent. An inconsistent design pattern means they might be borrowing assets from places such as Freepik.com or worse, stealing them. Designers who use free illustrations and vectors as a crutch should not be doing work beyond low-key social media posts. Same goes for copywriters who tend to steal lines more than create them.

You're paying a premium for the brain

Expensive talent is expensive because of

their knowledge, experience and the process. They have a streamlined method of work and ideation. This comes with the years in the industry and knowledge acquisition, which produces work that lasts. A new designer might create a logo for you that looks great but a few years down the line, when you are producing merchandise, your vendor might come in and say that the logo has too many fine details to show up on the materials or that it simply doesn't look good on the medium. This problem was made apparent to me when one of my clients was making a wax seal with a logo that was beautiful in its own right but the seal-makers could not fit in such fine details and text.

Focus on how they will do the job

What you want is someone who is aligned with your own interests. If a freelancer has been doing excellent work producing long form copy like blogs and such, it might not be a good idea to make them write headline copies for press ads. Ask the professional to tell you what the process of the job will be. Without a clear cut process that makes sense, you risk the timeline and objective of your work. Their attitude and approach to work is also important. A person who waits for inspiration to strike them is a risky investment. I always make it clear to my clients how I am going to handle the entire process in a step-by-step manner where I explain how many work hours each phase or step will take.

Have a clear idea of what you want

If you think that the freelancer will figure out what you want, know that in most cases, they aren't mind readers. A good professional will have the right questions to ask you but referring to the first point, fresh talent will often try not to ask questions to please you. Always have several references handy to show the freelancer what sort of work you want and make the objective clear. For example, the design might be for brand awareness and not sales. Such objectives must always be made clear.

Create a viable timeline

Remember one thing, ASAP is not a time. It's a vague idea of a time. Try to give your freelancer space to think and produce the content instead of rushing them into work that may or may not be good. Best is if you create the timeline after a discussion with the individual. That way, there's a middle ground and more space for iterations.

Avoid extravagance

Quick talkers with low bids and great promises are the dangerous individuals you would want to avoid. In some cases, a person might come in and tell you that they will grow your business tenfold without even properly hearing about your business or understanding how the sales process works. Or worse, after hearing it, they don't ask questions and just nod vigorously in agreement. These are salesmen who just want the money and will most probably be

problematic throughout the work process.

Get someone who will explain the work without buzzwords in the simplest manner. Look at their portfolio and carry on.

Give written briefs

Writing isn't everyone's strongest suit but having the instructions, objectives, and references in an email or a PDF file is immensely helpful for the freelancer. Jot down your thoughts on a Word file, what you want, how you want it, where you want it, why you want it, your key objectives [sales, brand awareness, lead generation, engagement], the timeline, relevant references and any pain points you want to address. Also make it clear what can go and what cannot go according to your compliance, brand guidelines and regulations.

Finally, never lose sight of the objective

It's solely your job to stick to the key objective of the project since you are the project manager. Yes, all of what I said makes it sound like a lot of work but that's the opportunity cost of not hiring an agency or a studio.

RUMMAN R KALAM

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THE HOLY TRINITY OF FREELANCER COMPLAINTS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

Being a freelance professional in the country is a masochistic dream that a lot of creatives have. Unfortunately, the path is riddled with many hurdles that one must overcome. Here are the common complaints I have gleaned from my peers and their angsty Facebook statuses.

CLIENTS AREN'T PAYING ME

In most cases, this happens because you don't have the proper paperwork done with your client. The chain goes as follows: Quotation -> Invoice -> Work Order [from client] -> Money Receipt. These are the necessary documents you'll need. The quotation wasn't always necessary for me in a lot of cases because it was done verbally but the work order is the most important piece of paper. Ensure that the date of payment, your deliverables and your name is mentioned in the work order. Bad clients will say you don't need it or "It'll be ready." Don't buy into these and never start working without the work order unless you know what you're doing. Make this abundantly clear to the client. If they refuse, you don't need that business, they're trouble. Once your papers are solid, you can always go to Facebook and whine if your client downright refuses to pay or stops picking up your calls. Word of advice, always be sure what you're doing is right. Even good clients don't like a whiner. Finally, if the client does hesitate to talk about their work and push you for it, why should you feel ashamed about asking about the money? Being

straightforward is the best favour you can do for yourself.

I CAN'T DO "GOOD" WORK FOR CLIENTS

Oh boy, this one again. You're a creative service professional, not a passionate artist. The client knows what they want if they have been running their business for years, they definitely know what their target group wants unless it's a failing or new business. Your passion and work should be separate, at least during the early years of your work. This is sort of like going into a company as an executive and expecting to do C-level jobs. But still, at the end of the day, if you have solid facts, data, and cases to back your argument up, there might be a middle ground where the two parties can meet. Remember, if anything goes wrong, it's on you and you have to answer for it. Once you are established in the industry, you'll have numerous opportunities to produce good work. Just keep holding onto that passion and use it in your own personal time, don't expect to produce masterpieces all the time. Good work opportunities are rare and you must wait for them.

I JUST STARTED AND I CAN'T GET ANY CLIENTS
Are you using your social media

accounts to showcase your work? Are your peers and seniors aware of your talents? If yes and you still don't have any work, have you been saying no to pro-bono projects? As much as the industry screams at you to never do free jobs, understand that you have an empty portfolio. Brands want experience or someone who has relevant projects under their belt. There are numerous voluntary organisations which can help you get some experience onto your portfolio. Key fact here is that you should not stop working and improving yourself. Opportunities will come and you must be prepared for them. Also keep an eye out for Facebook groups where people look for freelancers that match your skill set. Meet and talk to more people about your work. Networking is a skill that will kill your career if you don't develop it. There's no shame in trying to network because both parties are benefiting from the arrangement, it's not like you're forcing someone into it. Don't force people into anything. That's bad. Don't be bad.

RUMMAN R KALAM

Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

5 TIPS FOR FREELANCERS

DEVELOPING A GOOD WORK ETHIC

Having worked as a freelance writer for quite a long time, I know how difficult it is to motivate yourself to work from home. On some days, you just don't feel like getting out of bed, changing out of the pajamas and getting work done. But it's actually very important to have a good work ethic if you want to retain your clients. Professionalism is key when it comes to freelancing.

1. Always be punctual

Freelance work is most often deadline-based. Missing too many deadlines will definitely create a bad impression on your client, and you'll have to say goodbye to getting any work from them in the future. You should also be punctual when it comes to attending meetings.

2. Don't be afraid to voice your opinions

If your client gives you vague instructions, make sure to ask the right questions to get an exact idea of what you have to do for them. It's best to be safe than sorry.

3. Don't hesitate to talk about the remuneration

Often times, young freelancers don't want to bring up the topic of

money. But even if you are new in this industry, or the client is someone close to you, remember to ask them about the payment. Ask them politely, and always use invoices when making monetary transactions.

4. Create a routine

It's really quite difficult to get yourself to work while you're at home. You can create a fixed time window for work each day, but do give yourself some time off every week. Clearly communicate to your clients that just because you work from home, it does not mean that you are available 24/7.

5. Strive for perfection

While it is impossible to always get every detail right, you should still try to maintain integrity and give your best to everything you do, even if the client is being a douchebag. Your reputation depends on your work, so haphazardly doing things in the last minute will cost you more than just money.

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