

# FREELANCING

## A better alternative to your 9 to 5 job?

*“The comfort of your home, flexible working hours, and the convenience of being your own boss. As a freelancer, you get to revel in all these benefits and more. But is this enough to abandon your traditional 9 to 5 job and start thinking about a career as a full time freelancer? Can you reap more from the latter compared to the former?”*



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In a country like Bangladesh, the thought of becoming a full time freelancer is quite hard to grasp at first, irrespective of the field you plan to work in. The normal full time jobs which require you to attend your workstation for a minimum of 40 hours a week is what most people believe to be the only form of employment. For instance, if one introduces themselves as a web developer or a graphics designer, people will visualise the work to be from 9 to 5, five days a week, sharing an office space with other co-workers.

The initial problem people faced with online freelancing was the issue of receiving their payments. Working across borders with clients from different countries would bring in a good amount of money for anybody. But how was one supposed to get hold of their payment?

Back then, there were only a limited number of options in hand to have the payment delivered, all of which were pretty complex and required a long wait. Compared to the past, modern methods of payment are simpler and quicker. Most freelancing websites now have the option to send

funds directly to your bank account or through a third party. They verify your identity by taking in your National ID number or your passport details. After which, they go on to verify your profile information with that of your bank account by matching credentials – name, date of birth, and so on. Once everything is verified, funds are then transferred to your local bank account which will take between three to five working days to complete the process. These modern methods of payment are secured and fast which make them reliable to the freelancers.

Getting hold of projects or jobs is another problem to a lot of people who turn to the freelance industry. Many newcomers are discouraged right at the start as they fail to land projects from clients. It is believed that the market is a difficult place for newcomers, but is that really the case?

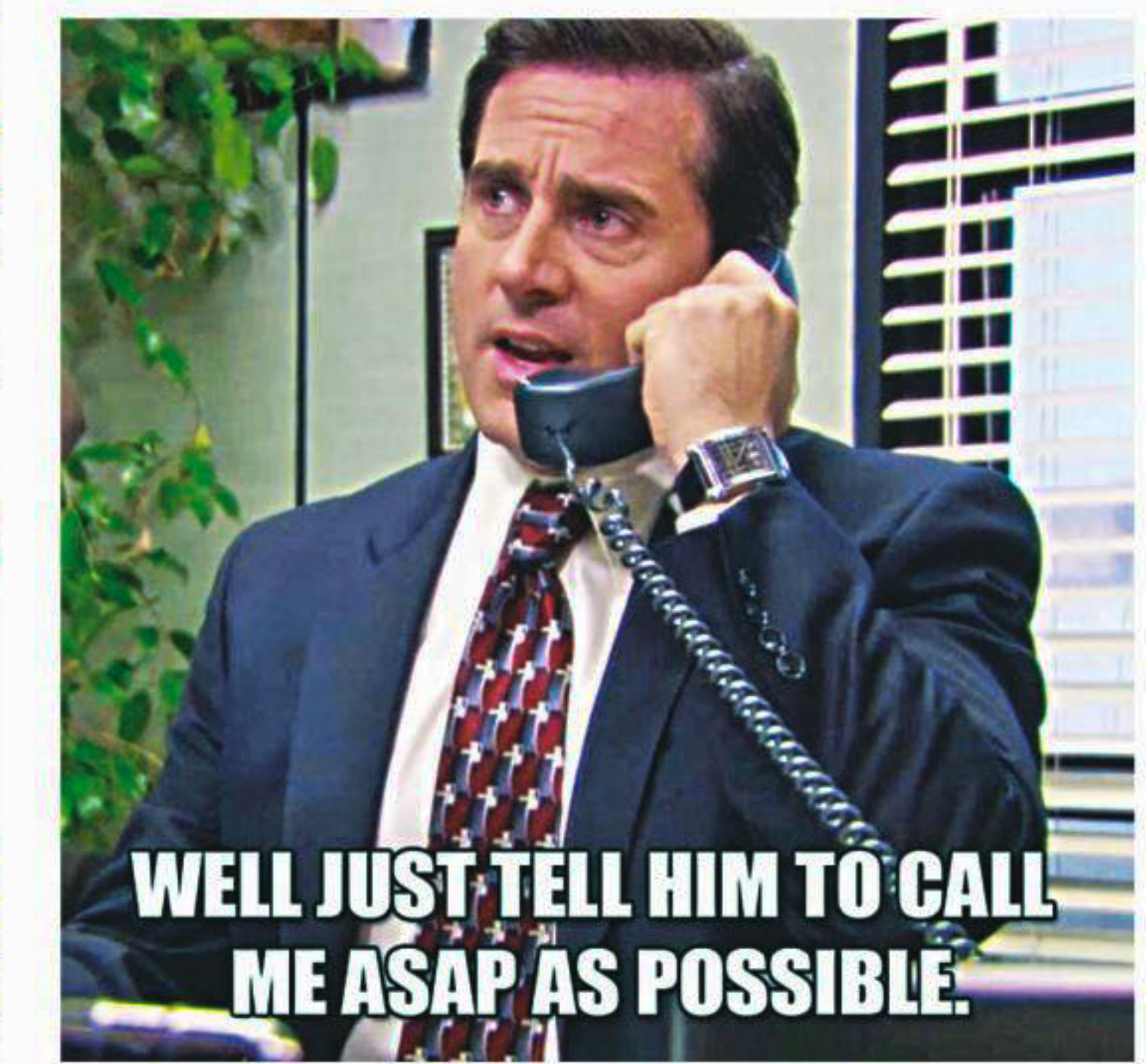
As a freelance web developer myself, I had the opportunity to work with a few overseas clients. Marco Ruiz, a micro-electronics engineer and a professional fitness trainer from Belgium, is one of them. He has been utilising the services from the freelancing market since the beginning of 2018. He does prefer experienced professionals to get his job

done but at the same time, he also prefers to give newbies the chance to prove themselves. He also mentioned that new workers are often given more preference by buyers at times mainly because they're able to get the job done quicker as they are likely to be less busy with work. New sellers also charge comparatively less at the initial stages, so a lot of buyers love to take that advantage. Despite this, it is still a good amount of money to work for given the size and time period of the project.

Besides, there are a lot of options to choose from when picking up a service to offer. From writing articles to developing programmable bots, and marketing to graphics design, there is a wide range of services you could offer. You can even come up with your own service in certain cases.

Imran Hossain Alif, a third-year university student and web developer has been working as a full-time freelancer for just over a year now. In this small period of time, he has worked with over 70 clients from 23 different countries on 100+ projects.

On being asked whether freelancing is a better option, considering all the benefits it has to offer and compared to



our local full time job, Imran said, “It’s definitely the better option. It’s a huge opportunity for young people like us to be able to work across borders with international clients and organisations. There are many Bangladeshis who are currently handling large projects as freelancers along with their teams. So it’s not just an amazing opportunity, but also a huge platform for the young generation to lead the future tech sector from Bangladesh.”

What’s more amazing is that the women of our country are in no means lagging behind in this field. The support from the ICT Division, different government and non-government organisations in this case is praiseworthy. The flexible working hours is what makes a lot of women choose freelancing over the usual jobs. Such was the case for Hafsa Anwar. Currently in her third year as an honours student at Eden Women’s College, Hafsa is a web developer who has chosen to work full time as a freelancer. She feels that the jobs available these days have certain complications in the recruitment procedures. Hafsa prefers spending time with her family and hence, freelancing was the easy choice. She believes that as time passes and she has more experience, her earning will increase as well.

There are many who have similar success stories. At the same time, there are many who have failed to embrace freelancing for many reasons.

“Lack of patience and self-motivation is what brings many of them down,” said Imran, “They fail to develop their skills which results in them being left behind in this gradually developing tech world.”

Apart from skill development, giving enough time is also a pre-requisite for freelancing. Many people fail to find work as a freelancer not because of their lack of skills but because they’re unable to invest time in their work.

Currently completing his undergrad, Abdullah Al Bakir underwent professional training as a web developer to work as a freelancer but eventually, his efforts went in vain as he couldn’t manage time for this profession. At the initial stage, freelancing is pretty time consuming and it’s hard to achieve success right away. Besides, one has to remember that freelancing requires constant internet connectivity in most cases, which in our country can be a hard to come by. This ultimately results in delayed communication which is one of

the many things that can hamper the relationship with clients.

All in all, freelancing isn’t the bed of roses that many of us think at first thought. It has a different approach to it that not everyone can work on. But how does it compare to our regular jobs? How do the two work environments differ from one another?

Asif\* worked for three different software companies following his graduation. After that, he took up the mantle as a freelancer. When asked why he made the switch he pointed out that it was just not worth it. “C++, Java, HTML, CSS, JS, PHP and the list of programming languages and skills they want to see on your résumé goes on and on. But when you join, they will give you a salary that will not be up to the standard. Except a few companies, most of the organisations aren’t able to pay the salary you would want.”

He also pointed out that his old job required him to work continuously with others, which he had no problem with. The problem came when someone else’s incompetence as a professional would cost him and his entire team to work more than needed. As a freelancer, Asif avoids such situations and at the same time, reaps the usual benefits he is entitled to.

Tamal Sen, final-year undergraduate student at KUET, and a freelance web developer for the past three years, added, “Though freelancing has greater opportunity than traditional jobs, it has some risks too. Working with multiple international clients with different time zones can keep you up all night and take a toll on health as daily work life of a freelancer doesn’t have a fixed schedule. There is no guarantee of continuous workflow so it might result in unstable income. Newbie freelancers are prone to these risks and should manage their expectations accordingly.”

This argument is one worth looking into. The facts and the details are all there. What one needs is to make a judgement call and choose an option from the two.

*\*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.*

*Faisal wants to be the very best, like no one ever was. To survive university is his real test, to graduate is his cause. Send him memes and motivation at abir.afc@gmail.com*