



# HOW TO LIVE THE FREELANCE LIFE

## LESSONS FROM 1,000 INDEPENDENTS

Freelancing is the future, and today's freelancers are charting a dramatic new course.

For this report, Freelancers Union surveyed more than 1,100 freelancers nationwide to ask them how they piece together their lives, how they get gigs, how they work with other freelancers, and how they define success.

The results were strong and consistent across age, gender, and industry. Put simply, freelancers are building lives of meaningful independence – free, connected, and values-driven. They're redefining success around passion and flexibility, not consumption and the corner office.

And they're loving it.

How do we know? Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) freelancers said they would keep freelancing even if they were offered a traditional full-time job.

This new workforce is here to stay – and it's growing every day. That's why private studies predict 50% of the workforce could be freelance by the end of the decade.<sup>1</sup> And that's why Millennials in particular have flocked to Freelancers Union, surging 3000% since 2007.<sup>2</sup> They know that freelancing is the new normal, and freelancing gives them the power they need to build the lives they want.

**Read on to see how today's freelancers see themselves, their work, and their lives – and what lessons we all should learn from their collective wisdom.**

*(Survey methodology: online survey of 1186 freelancers conducted by Emergent Research, May 14-28, 2014)*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mbopartners.com/state-of-independence/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.freelancersunion.org/blog/dispatches/2014/06/18/new-workforce-by-numbers/>

**For freelancers, work means so much more than money.**

How do you define success? For freelancers, it's not about getting rich.

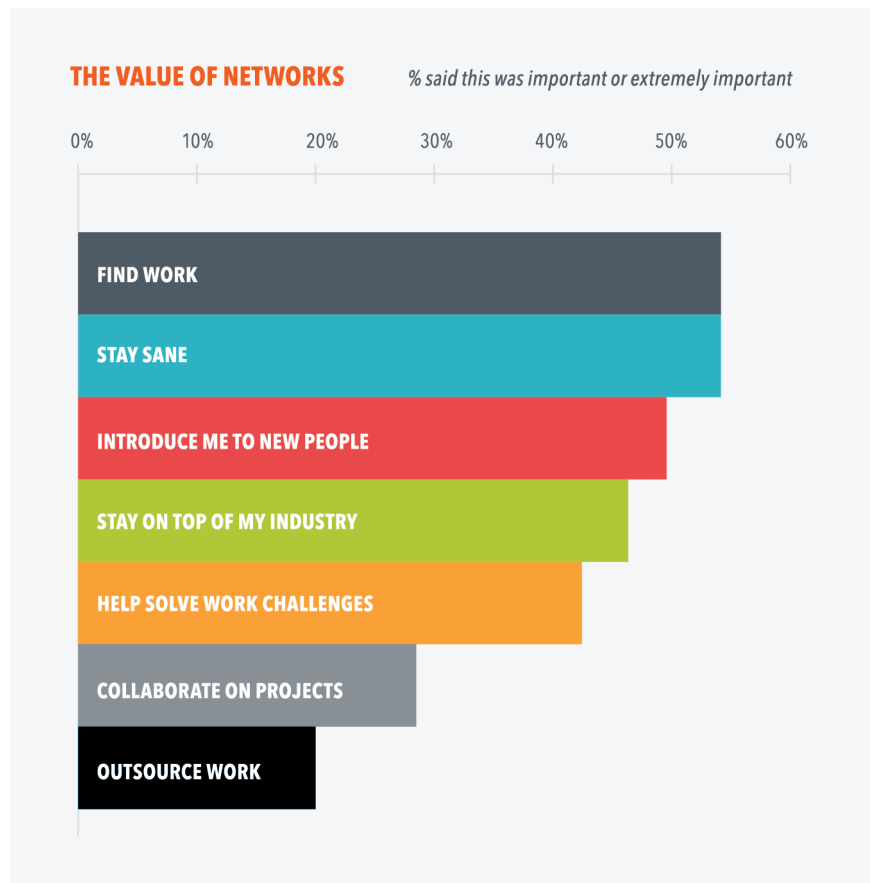
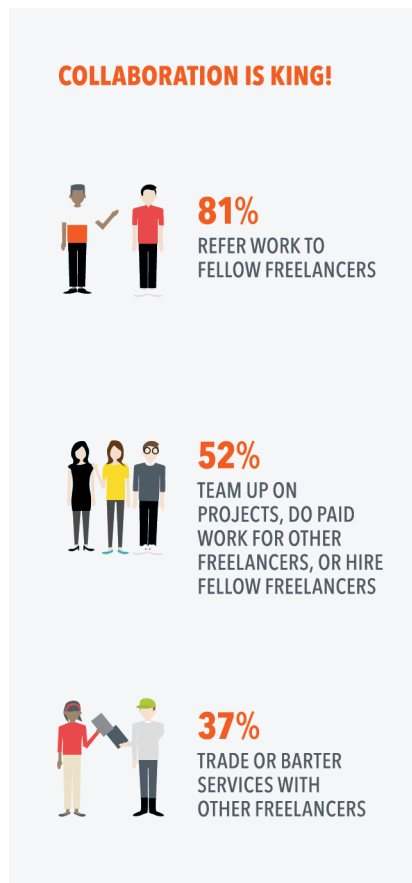
Freelancers consistently told us they prioritize doing something they love over simply chasing down more money. They want time, choice, and freedom.

That became clear when we asked freelancers why they freelance. Here are the top answers (% is how many respondents said these considerations were "important or extremely important" to them):



**Freelancing doesn't mean being alone. Networks are key.**

Freelancers build their networks because they know a strong network is key to surviving and thriving. Freelancers turn to each other for jobs (and pass jobs along to people they trust). They also get support and guidance from networks of other independents who truly understand what it means to live the freelance life in a sustainable, meaningful way.



**Freelancers don't put all their eggs in one basket.**

Successful freelancers take their cues from the best financial consultants – diversify, diversify, diversify.

Rather than put all their eggs in a single income basket (like, ahem, traditional employees), freelancers tap into a lot of different income streams.

Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) respondents said they earn income from more than one source in a typical month. That could mean they have several traditional clients. Or they're holding down a traditional job and moonlighting doing something they love. Maybe they're renting out a spare room on Airbnb. Or some combination of income-generating work that's unique to them. More than 70% (73%) said they have freelanced while holding down a traditional full-time job in order to augment their income (70%) or pursue a passion (52%).



**There is a path out there. Follow it.**

When Freelancers Union began in 1995, a common refrain from our members was “There’s no manual for freelancing. We’re all making it up as we go along.”

That was true then. But not so much now.

More than 42 million freelancers have been blazing the path and showing the way. They’ve experimented. They’ve succeeded and failed. They’ve learned and iterated. Together, they’re writing that manual in real-time.

Freelancers are showing businesses, policymakers, and each other that freelancing can be a sustainable and empowering way to work and live.

As more and more Americans go freelance, the lessons learned from today’s successful freelancers can help workers make a smoother transition, businesses build and serve new markets, and policymakers create smarter ways to nurture and support this new workforce.

**THEIR LESSONS ARE PRETTY SIMPLE:**

- *Be committed*
- *Be nimble*
- *Be connected*

No freelancer can succeed on their own -- and the economy relies more on freelance workers all the time. We all need connection, support, and camaraderie. Successful freelancers are demonstrating that every day.

