How To
Sell Your Services Online
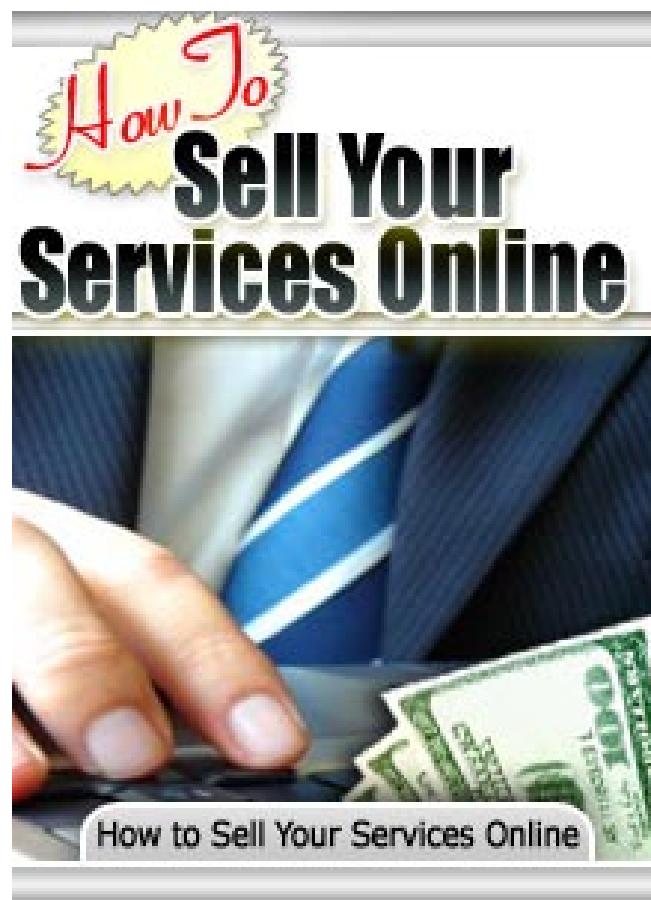
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The Internet – A Level Playing Field

About twelve or thirteen years ago, your ship came in, and you may not have even realized it. You see, that was about the time that personal computers started appearing in homes around the world, and we all started accessing the Internet. At the time, many of us didn't realize it, but the playing field had just been totally leveled, and things that you never thought would be possible became possible. Your ship came in.

If you didn't realize that your ship had arrived back then, there is good news. You still have time to catch that ship before it sails away. With the use of the Internet, you can start your own business with very little invested. In fact, you can start your own business, and become financially secure – if not financially independent – with very little. This is what I meant when I said that the playing field had been leveled.

Because we have the Internet, you have just as much of a chance at success as you would if you started a brick and mortar business. In fact, the chances of success are even higher, although many people don't realize it. You see, with the Internet, you don't need the large investment that would be required to start a traditional brick and mortar business. You also won't have that overhead every month. You are also not subject to being limited to customers in your geographic area. You have a global customer base. That is what increases your chance of success.

But you must also consider the other side of the coin. Anyone can start a business online, and right now – today – there are millions, if not billions, of online businesses. Not all of them do succeed. It takes time, patience, and know-how to make it work. It does not, however, take a lot of money. That isn't to say that it doesn't take any money. Anyone who tells you that you can successfully get an online business off of the ground, for free, is pretty much lying to you.

Since you are reading this, the chances are good that you have considered starting your own online business at some point. You may have even done so – successfully. But if this is all new to you, you may be a bit concerned about the fact that you don't have a product to sell. If you are not new to the whole idea of making a living online, you may have already realized the truth – everybody has something that can be sold online.

What I'm talking about here is services, as opposed to physical or digital products. When you sell services, you and your service are essentially your product. Now, if you have a service – a skill – to sell, you have just increased your chances of success with an online business tremendously. Anyone can create or buy a product to sell to others. In fact, there are millions of people doing

that right now, and again, not all of them are successful. In fact, few are successful - but not everyone has marketable skills.

When a product creator wants to sell a product, and they do not have marketable skills, guess what? They hire someone who has the skills that they lack. Those that have sense enough to hire a professional to get the job done right are more likely to succeed.

That's where you come in. If you really think about it, you probably have skills that may not be very marketable out in the physical world, but those same skills may be in very high demand online. If you are a programmer, the chance that you will be hired by Microsoft and move to Redwood, California to work in a cushy office is slim to none. Those jobs are already taken. But there is lots of work to be had, and it is provided by people who are not sitting in an executive office in Redwood.

As an Internet Marketer, you have most likely needed to hire the services of various professionals. These may have been writers, graphical designers, web designers, or programmers. But the chances are good that during your career as an Internet Marketer, you've picked up a few skills of your own. For example, as an Internet Marketer, you probably know quite a bit about writing sales copy.

Do you have any idea how much that skill is worth online? There are copywriters making anywhere from $2000 on up to $20,000 for writing one webpage of sales copy right now. The difference in their rates depends on how well known they are, and how much success they have helped others to achieve.

There are more and more people coming online everyday, trying to break into online business. They have absolutely no idea what they are doing, but they think that they know how to get started. It doesn't take long before they realize that they don't have a clue, and they start looking for help. Why isn't their sales page working? Why aren't they moving up through the ranks in the search engines? They need help – and they are willing to pay for it. Again, that's where you come in.

Internet marketers sell products, and sometimes, they supplement their income by selling their skills to other Internet marketers. It is a very common thing, and believe it or not, most Internet Marketers who have made a name for themselves in the Internet Marketing circle don't even advertise the fact that they do sell their skills to other marketers – they just do it quietly, and laugh all the way to the bank.

So, what marketable skills do you have to share? Let's take a look at the possibilities.

Different Types of Services to Sell

Just about any service can be sold online – even if the work that you do for your clients is offline. With that said, we are going to focus on those services which are typically related to online business needs, since those are the most lucrative, and the easiest to get started in. Below, you will find some of the best paying service related industries along with details concerning each one.

- **Writing –** If you can string sentences together, you can get work. Writing is in high demand these days. Business owners have websites, and those websites need content, and lots of it. Furthermore, information products, such as ebooks, are hot, and again, if you want to sell an ebook, you need someone to write it, unless you are going to write it yourself.

  Breaking into writing is very easy, and all that is really required is some good writing samples. With those in hand, you can join any one of the freelance job sites, bid on jobs, and find work almost instantly.

  The amount that you will be paid, however, will vary depending on the work that needs to be done. Most writers charge either by the word or by the page, but it is a good idea to browse the job postings at the site or sites that you are hoping to gain work through to get an idea as to what the going rates are for that site. They do vary. You will need good word processing software, such as Microsoft Word for this work.

- **Graphical Design –** Graphical design is also in high demand. Graphic design programs are hard to understand for anyone who is not skilled in this field, and of course, knowing how to use color and design is the key to your success.

  For this type of work, you probably need one or more good graphical design programs, such as Adobe or Paint Shop Pro. This software is not cheap, but if you learn how to use it, you will easily earn your money back quickly. With your software, create several samples to show prospective clients, and sign up with the freelance job sites. You don't need to be a great artist to do graphic design, but you do need the software, and the knowledge needed to create outstanding graphics with that software.

- **Programming –** The term 'programming' covers a wide range. Programming can be anything from application programming to PHP programming for the web. If you have programming skills, you are in high demand.

Many people think that the programming field is flooded, but that isn't so. Many people also think that they cannot compete with the low rates of overseas programmers, but again, this is wrong. Many people don't want overseas programmers, because there is a communication barrier.

Programmers charge varying rates. Jobs may be charged by the hour, or at a flat rate. Again, it is a good idea to scope out the going rate for different types of programming at the freelance sites you will work through.

- **Consultation –** Like programming, consultation also covers a wide range. If you have knowledge, you can be a consultant. Unfortunately, most consultants do not gain clients through the most widely used freelance job sites. However, there are specialized freelance sites, specifically for consultants, such as oDesk at http://www.odesk.com.

  Consultants charge a wide range of prices, and those prices are usually charged by the hour. Most consultation can occur online or over the telephone, but some jobs will require you to make an appearance, and your travel should be covered in the fee that you charge. Attorneys, sales specialists, accountants, web designers, programmers, writers, and numerous other professionals can become consultants.

- **Customer Support –** Not all customer support gets farmed out overseas. Many business owners want customer support staff that is located in the United States or Canada, even if it does cost more. Customer support can be done from your home, however finding these types of jobs are not easy.

  While breaking into this field may not be terribly easy, once you have broken into this field, you can gain customers easily through referrals. Depending on the level of support needed, prices vary, although the going rate for such support in the United States ranges from $8 per hour on up to $25 per hour. Your clients may also want to pay you based on the number of support tickets or support calls that you handle.

- **Copyrighting –** Great copyrighters make great money. In fact, copyrighting is one of the highest paid Internet based professions today. Earlier, I mentioned that a copyrighter can make up to $20,000 – or more – for writing one webpage of sales copy, and that was not an exaggeration.

  To break into this field, however, you must make a name for yourself. You need proven results with your copyrighting, and this may mean that you must start out charging a great deal less than everyone else, and working your way up the pay scale. But, if you know how to write in a way that sales, you can make a very nice living indeed.

- **Search Engine Optimization Skills –** Although this field isn't as popular as it once was, there is still a need for people who truly have the necessary skills to make a webpage or website rank well in the search engines. Like copyrighting, however, you need to have proven results, and you will have to work your way up the pay scale. For this work, you really do need skill. There are numerous people and companies out there that claim to be SEO experts, but really know very little about it.

- **Translation Services –** The ability to speak, read, and write in more than one language is a highly valuable skill. People are willing to pay big money to translate their websites and sales copy into different languages, so that they can truly serve a global market. Businesses may also need translators to translate in-person or telephone conversations.

- **Script Installation Services –** When someone starts an online business, they typically try to save money by doing as much of the work as they can themselves. Today, numerous programs, such as FrontPage, make it very easy for people to do a lot of the work themselves. Unfortunately for them – and fortunately for you – they often lack the necessary skills to install certain software or scripts on their websites.

- **Website Design –** Even though there is a great deal of software that makes it incredibly easy to create a webpage or website, many people simply don't want to learn how to use it, or to take the time to design and implement their own web design. While there are numerous web designers out there, wanting for work, this can still be a lucrative field.

  The trick here is to be better than everyone else. Become known as a 'top' designer. Design pages and win awards. Have lots of samples to show clients, and offer additional services, such as website maintenance as well. Also, make it a point to learn how to design templates, such as WordPress templates, and you will go very far.

- **Professional Services –** Just about any professional can make money on the Internet. Attorneys even work online, and make a nice living, simply by listening to a person's case, and offering legal advice. Accountants are utilizing the Internet and finding numerous clients among home business owners. Even counselors and therapists are getting in on the action, and offering their services in a web based environment.

As you can see, just about any service can be sold on the Internet. It's just a question of realizing that there is a market to be found on the Internet, and knowing how to find that market.

Your Service Website

If you are going to sell your services online, you will definitely need a website, as well as your own domain name. The website that you use to sell products usually is not conducive to selling your services, although some services actually complement your products, and vice versa. Some people even offer their services while selling other people's products, if those products complement the service.

Regardless of how you do it, you need a website and a domain name. Ideally, your domain name will reflect the service that you are offering. For example, think of the name Toys R Us. What do you suppose they sell at a store named Toys R Us? Toys, of course! You need to think in those terms when you choose your domain name.

Many professionals use their own name, and while this is a good idea, and you should definitely secure www.yourname.com, as well as www.yourname.name, you also need a domain name that reflects the service that you offer. The website that contains your name can be used to tell the world about yourself, and of course should be linked to your service website.

Obviously, you will need a place to host your domain name and web pages. There are numerous opportunities, and as an Internet Marketer, you may already have a web host. If not, consider using HostGator, at http://www.hostgator.com or GoDaddy, at http://www.godaddy.com. You can also purchase your domain name or names through GoDaddy.

If you don't know how to design web pages, hire a professional. You are about to embark on selling your own services, so this is a good way to see how the process works. Surf on over to one of the freelance job sites and post your job so that professionals can bid on it. Otherwise, get your pages designed, and make sure that you do a professional job yourself.

Your service website should include a page for each of the services that you offer, a page that tells your potential clients what makes you an expert in this field, a page about you personally, a contact page, and a page for client testimonials. Whether or not you post your prices for your services is up to you, although most freelancers agree that this is not a good idea.

It is better to open up the lines of communication with a potential client before you discuss pricing. Otherwise, they may see your prices and leave. You want to communicate with them first, as this gives you the opportunity to sell them on you, and help them to realize that you are the best person for their job.

It cannot be stressed enough that your service website needs a professional appearance. When people want a job done, they want a professional to do it, and frankly, if your website looks homemade, they will surf away in search of a 'professional.'

If you are designing your website yourself, get several opinions from true professionals before going live with it. You can also join one of the numerous webmaster mailing lists or forums and request a critique of your website, although you will need to publish your pages before you can ask for the critique.

Have a logo designed for your business, and put it on your website. This gives a professional stamp to the website, and your business, and somehow instills more confidence in potential clients. It says 'I'm professional and I'm serious.' Your website also needs a nice header graphic. If you are not a graphical designer, again, hire a freelancer to do this for you. It doesn't cost much at all.

Have your picture professionally taken, and include it on your website. The ideal place for it is on the page that tells your potential clients about you, or on the home page. A snap shot taken at home won't do. This needs to be a professional picture, with you dressed up and your hair looking especially nice. This is not a 'Glamour' shot! You should be dressed in a professional manner for this picture.

On your contact page, use a feedback form that potential clients can fill out and submit to contact you. Also include your telephone number, and your mailing address. With the contact form, you do not need to include your email address. Your potential clients will have that once they reply to you, and by not providing it on your contact page, you will cut down on the amount of spam that you receive.

If you aren't sure what a professional website should look like for your particular field, take the time to look at the websites of your competitors. For example, a writer's website would include everything mentioned above, but it would also include a page – or pages – of writing samples. A graphical designer's website would include samples of their work as well.

A consultant's website, of course, would not include samples of their work, but would include testimonials from happy clients. You don't necessarily want your website to look just like your competitors sites, but you do want to be 'in line' with their sites. The idea is for your site to look professional, and not to look homemade, and to use colors and fonts that please your potential clients – as opposed to colors and fonts that cause them to go temporarily, or permanently, blind.

Using Online Freelance Sites

In most cases, the easiest way to break into selling your services is through one of the many freelance job sites on the Internet. With that said, however, not all types of services can be marketed this way. Furthermore, most people find that they actually make more money by working off these sites, than they do working through them eventually.

But again, if you are just starting out, and your service is one that works well with the freelance job sites, such as writing, programming, graphic design, web design, or other professions such as these, it is a good idea to start out working through these sites.

First, this puts you into instant contact with potential clients. Second, most sites work to protect the clients and the service providers, by using an escrow service for payment for the work. This way, the client can be sure that he or she is going to get what they are paying for, and you can be sure that you are going to be paid for your work, provided that you have done the work to the client's specifications.

It typically works the same way from one site to another. You are allowed to post your profile, where you can list your skills, and tell potential clients a little bit about yourself and your background. With that done, you can look at the jobs that have been posted by clients, and submit bids for the jobs that you are interested in winning. The client looks through the various bids and chooses a winner. The winner then communicates with the client to ensure that they have all of the information and/or materials needed to do the job, and they go to work.

Once the work is complete, it is uploaded through the site, where the client can download and review it. If the work has been done to his or her specifications, they notify the freelance job site of this, and the payment is released to you. Some sites will pay you immediately, while others only pay on specific dates. Most of the freelance sites will work with online payment systems, such as PayPal, and if not, they will mail you a check, or direct deposit the funds into your bank account. All sites charge a fee, which is usually a percentage of the price paid for the work. If there is a dispute, most freelance job sites have an arbitration process to settle the dispute.

Most freelance job sites have a rating system. What this means is that after work has been completed and accepted, the client can post a rating for you, and that rating is averaged with other ratings that you have received for a total rating. This rating, along with the client's review of your work, is posted on your profile at the site. Most sites also allow service providers to rate clients as well. This allows you to view the clients profile, read the reviews, and determine whether or not this is a client that you want to work with. If reviews let you know that this client

never seems to be pleased with anything, for example, you may not want to bid on his or her jobs.

Building up your own rating takes time. Often, service providers sign up for these sites (membership is free at some sites, but not fee based at others), and they see that they have some really stiff competition. They often feel that they will never win any jobs, and give up quickly.

The fact is that there is a trick to winning jobs. First, underbid everyone in the beginning. No matter how much you need the money, in the beginning, it can't be about money. In the beginning, it is about ratings and reviews – making a name for you at that site. Get four or five jobs under your belt, no matter how cheaply you have to do them, and then you are ready to compete, at prices that are more in line with what you had in mind.

Another key to winning jobs is to set up a great profile page. Give potential clients confidence in your with your words. If you are not a writer, hire one. Tell them what your skills are, give them your background information, and let them write words that will have potential clients banging on your door – even if you have no ratings or reviews yet. Also, make sure that you provide samples of your work, if this applies.

Here is a short list of freelance job sites that you should start with:

- Rent-A-Coder – http://www.rentacoder.com

- ScriptLance – http://www.scriptlance.com

- Elance – http://www.elance.com

- iFreelance – http://www.ifreelance.com

- Guru – http://www.guru.com

Again, you won't make as much money through the freelance sites as you will make away from them. This is just a jumping off point, and it is a great way to get a good following of clients, as well as a name for yourself and referrals. Eventually, however, you should start looking for different ways to promote your services…and when you do, take the clients that you found through the freelance sites with you, by letting them know that you are striking out on your own, and leaving them with your contact information.

Using Forums to Sell Services

If you have broken into selling your services through the freelance sites, or your service wasn't one that could be sold through these sites, you may be ready to look for other ways to market your services. Aside from the freelance sites and referrals, the next fastest way to get the word out is through online forums.

Online forums are great for numerous things. People use forums to share information or to ask questions about specific topics. They also use forums to sell products to specific markets, and this includes services. The idea here is to find top forums that serve the potential clients that you want to reach, and to become a part of that community so that you can get the word out about your services, without actually advertising.

As you may know, the best forums do not allow advertising, but they do allow the use of signature files. You want to find forums that are active and do not contain spam. You want forums where people actually read the posts, as opposed to those that exist for the sole purpose of people posting so that they can use a signature file. You want a true community, and you must be willing to truly become a part of that community.

Again, you want to hang out where your potential clients are hanging out. If you are a web designer, you of course want to be a part of communities that were formed for webmasters. It makes sense that numerous clients will come there in search of a web designer, but you also want to become a member of communities where people are not necessarily looking for a webmaster, but may have need of one at some point. For example, a web designer may want to check out forums designed for Internet Marketers. They may also want to check out forums designed for people who are interested in starting their own home business or online business.

Create a signature file, and make sure that you read the terms of service of the forums that you participate in. Some will have rules and regulations regarding what can and cannot be included in a signature file, and most will limit the number of lines that you can use for your signature. Make sure that you follow the rules, create an appropriate signature file – make sure you include your website address as well as a line that lets people know about the type of service that you offer – and start posting!

Remember that advertising typically is not allowed in good forums. If someone asks questions about your service in the forum, give them your email address, and ask them to contact you off site for more information regarding your service. This way, you can never be accused of advertising, and you won't be giving away any information to your competitors.

Client Referrals

In spite of the technology that we now have at our fingertips, and in spite of the numerous ways that there are to market a business – or a service – word of mouth is still the most effective form of advertising in existence today – and it's still free. What this means to you is that you need client referrals.

Client referrals, in today's world, come in two different forms. First, there is the traditional referral, where your clients, past and present, recommend you to someone else. That recommendation may be of their own free will, when they meet someone or know someone who is in need of the services you offer, or at your request, when you have a potential client on the line, but he wants assurances that you know what you are doing. This form of referral can be done via telephone, mail, or email.

The second type of client referral is the testimonial. Testimonials are often published on service websites, and included in any other promotional materials that the service provider uses, such as sales letters or flyers. The service provider asks past and present clients to write a testimonial for them, and the client does so, and sends the testimonial to the service provider.

Sometimes, a client wants to get something out of providing the testimonial. This is usually accomplished by including the client's business name and website address under his name, at the bottom of the testimonial. This creates a win-win situation for you, the client writing the testimonial, and potential client reading the testimonial.

If you've done a great job for a client, all you have to do is ask for the testimonial or referral letter, and in most cases, a client won't mind doing this for you at all. If you aren't sure as to whether or not the client will agree, at the beginning of the project, offer them a discounted rate, in exchange for their testimonial or referral. Even if they would have been hesitant, this will usually have them writing that glowing referral letter or testimonial in no time at all.

Asking for a referral or testimonial from a new client isn't always easy, and if you know that there will be additional work from the client, wait until you've completed a couple of projects for them before asking. Otherwise, ask before the project starts, and offer the discount.

In some fields, getting a testimonial is especially hard. For example, ghostwriters have a hard time getting clients to write testimonials or referral letters. In this case, you must look at things from the client's point of view. They have hired this writer to write something that the client is going to put his own name on. Obviously, he or she may not want the general public to know that he or she used a ghostwriter for any of their projects.

For this reason, many ghostwriters never have a testimonial or referral letter, and they must depend on their writing samples to close the deal. However, a good ghostwriter will get 'private' referrals.

This means that a happy client will share their secret with a close friend who is in need of writing services, and that friend will contact the ghostwriter. Some clients of ghostwriters, however, will never refer the ghostwriter, regardless of how much they love that service provider's work. There are two reasons for this.

The first, of course, is that the client never wants to admit that he or she is not the true author of the writing. The second reason is that the client doesn't want to share their resource with anybody else. Many will actually tell friends and colleagues that they use a ghostwriter, but will never release the name or contact information of that ghostwriter.

Most other service providers, however, typically have no problem getting a client to write a referral or testimonial for them at all, and it really is just a question of asking them at the end of the project – after a job well done – or asking them at the beginning of the project, and offering a break in the price.

If you ask at the beginning of the project, however, be sure that you let the client know that you only want them to write the referral letter or testimonial when the job is finished, and only if they are satisfied with your work…and that the price break will apply even if they do not write the referral or testimonial. The discount applies just by them agreeing to do this favor for you, and they are aware that the favor will only be granted at the end of the project, if they are happy clients.

When you do good work, and you continue to do good work for an extended period of time, you will find that you actually have to do very little advertising, if you have to do any advertising at all. Word will get around that you are the one to go to for whatever service it is that you provide, and the chances are good that you will have clients lining up at your door – or on your waiting list – especially if you offer competitive prices.

Again, there are all sorts of ways to promote your service. Some are very high tech and fancy. Some cost a great deal of money, and others don't cost anything at all – but when its all said and done, nothing will ever compare to word-of-mouth advertising that comes in the form of referrals and testimonials. So, be sure to collect those testimonials and get them on your service website. If you have referral letters, make sure that potential clients know that referrals are available upon request. Never publish a referral letter without the client's written permission! This is the difference between a referral letter and a testimonial. Clients generally understand that a testimonial is available for the entire world to see, but typically expect referral letters only to be seen by your prospective clients – privately.

Getting Paid and Other Legal Matters

Obviously, you want to be paid for your work, and if you are not using one of the freelance job sites, you have to provide a way for your clients to get money to you. In this day and age, there are numerous choices.

First, we have the old-fashioned way of getting paid. Your clients can send you a check through the mail, but if you are set up for it, they can also submit a check online. You will need a web hosting service that has SSL (secure socket layer) available, and you need to read their instructions on how to make sure that the page you set up for online checks is secure. Typically, a page that is secure starts with https:// in the address instead of http://.

If you use this option, you also need to have software to print checks, and you need to use actual checks in the printer. You can't print checks out on plain paper. Of all of the check printing software available, VersaCheck, at http://www.versacheck.com, seems to be the best. You will also need special ink for your printer. This ink is known as Magnetic Compliant ink, and it is available in most office supply stores, as well as online.

This is not the easiest method for getting paid online, however. Overall, the easiest way to get paid for services online is to use PayPal, at http://www.paypal.com. It is very easy to set up and use, and offers numerous merchant options. Furthermore, if your clients want to pay by check or credit card, they do not need a PayPal account of their own, which is very nice.

PayPal is free to set up, but there is a small fee charged when you receive funds in the account. However, there is no fee for transferring those funds to your bank account, and you can also receive a debit card, which can be used at most ATMs, after your account reaches a certain age.

Another viable payment option is 2CheckOut, at http://www.2checkout.com. There is also a fee charged here, and it is a percentage of the amount of money being received. 2CheckOut is very different from PayPal however, as there is a fee for getting your account set up, and instead of simply moving money to or from your bank account, 2CheckOut sends you a check for the balance in your account twice a month. Through 2Checkout you can receive payment by check or credit card.

You can also set up a merchant account, although this does require your clients to always pay by credit card, and of course there are set up fees, monthly fees, and transaction fees to contend with. It is easier than ever to get a merchant account, but there is still the possibility of being turned down for one.

Your fastest solution is to get a PayPal account. Most online business people already have a PayPal account, and even if they don't, they can still easily make payments to you via online check or credit card.

Of course, your clients can also wire money to you, but this isn't always easy for clients, and generally causes them more headaches than it is worth. They want good work, they want it as fast as possible, and they want a way to pay you that is convenient for them, as well as a way to pay you that does not cost them extra money.

You must also determine how you will charge your clients. The thing about services is that they cannot be repossessed. In the case of writing, programming, or graphical design, the copyright for the work belongs to you, until you are paid in full. In other cases, however, once the service has been performed, it is done, and you cannot take it back or withhold it if your client doesn't pay you.

Many service providers will have the client pay at least a portion of the fee up front. Typically, this is one third of the full price, with the rest payable upon delivery of the work. Some will require the client to pay half up front, and the remainder on delivery. It is never wise to ask the client to pay the full cost up front, except for some professions, such as counseling or consultation.

Also, you will be very wise to have a contract in place, in case you have to sue one of your clients in small claims court. Don't think that this doesn't happen – because it does. Your contract should be signed by your client, and mailed to you before work begins. Ideally, it will also be notarized. If you are working through a freelance site, where payment is put into escrow before you even begin the work, you don't need to worry about a contract.

Don't be afraid to ask for a contract! Many clients will prefer one, and most will ask you to sign an NDA (Non-Disclosure Agreement) or NCA (Non-Compete Agreement) as well. For obvious reasons, you should willingly sign these documents, but make sure that you read and understand them first. If you don't agree, don't sign. Let the client know what you don't like or don't understand, and work it out with them.

Finally, keep copies of all correspondence with your clients. When they send you emails, print them out. You need hard copies. When they call you, write down the date and time of the call, as well as the topics discussed or the instructions given. Of course, you should always keep any snail mail that your clients send you as well. Keep all of this correspondence, along with the contract and any agreements that you have signed, in a file folder, in a file cabinet. Stay organized – you never know when you may need to prove something.

Dealing with Multiple Jobs and Multiple Deadlines

If you are a service provider that only has to deal with one job, and one deadline at a time, you should know that you are in the minority – and you are very lucky if you can make a living in that fashion. Most service providers, regardless of the type of service that they provide, typically have multiple jobs going on at once, and it can become very overwhelming very fast.

You need organization in the worst way. Ideally, you will use a calendar – at the very least. A project management system, however, often works out better. A good project management system will allow you to not only keep up with client contact details, deadlines, and project instructions, but it will also allow you to map out projects, to assign tasks to other team members – if there are other team members – and will even enable you to provide your clients with documentation for ongoing work.

You can use either a web based project management system, such as Quick Base, at http://www.quickbase.com, or a system that is installed on your local machine, such as Microsoft Project. Again, even if you don't use a project management system, at the very least use a calendar, and make sure that you note project start dates, project deadlines, reporting dates, and any other pertinent information.

On the desktop of your computer, you should keep a file that contains all of the documents that pertain to each project. Give each project its own folder, and use a descriptive file name, and include the due date in the file name as well. This will further help you to keep up with deadlines.

Schedule everything. Schedule each step and phase of the work that you are doing, making sure that you have ample time to complete the project, before the deadline. This will allow extra time to complete the project in the event that you run into problems.

In your schedule, also make time for touching base with your clients. You should touch base with each client at least once each week, and you should make time to send and answer emails everyday. Include time for phone calls and administrative tasks as well.

You will find that if you work with a time and date schedule, and if you keep all of the documents that you need for your projects gathered in individual folders on your desktop, you manage quite nicely. Having that schedule serves an additional purpose. It will allow you to easily see if you can take on another job or not, and if not, when you will be able to take on another job, so that you can give your potential clients realistic start dates for their work.

In the beginning, you won't realize the importance of keeping certain work hours, but you will soon find that it is vitally important to your success, and your sanity. Not everyone has good common sense, unfortunately. If you don't establish working hours, or at the very least 'available' hours, you will have clients calling your home in the middle of the night. Don't assume that it won't happen to you – it will.

As much as service providers love and depend on their clients, most who have been in business for a while have found that some clients can be worse than telemarketers. If you don't establish 'available' hours, some clients will call in the middle of the night, when you are eating dinner, while you are in the shower, on weekends, and whenever else the mood strikes them. If they aren't made aware of your available hours, some automatically assume that you are always available…and if they call and find that you are not available, they actually become irritated with you.

Notice the difference between 'work' hours and 'available' hours. Depending on the service that you are providing, you may have hours when you are doing the work that you've been contracted to do, and hours when you are available to speak with clients. In most cases, if you are talking to clients, you aren't getting actual work done. This is why there is a difference between 'work' hours and 'available' hours, and this is why it is important that your clients know what those hours of availability are.

Get an answering machine, or use voice mail. During your work hours, use this wonderful invention, and screen your calls. If calls really disrupt your work, turn the volume down, and wait until your available hours to play your messages back. Also, have a separate phone line or cell phone for your business, and avoid giving your private numbers – the ones reserved for friends, family, and personal business matters – to your clients. Only give them your 'work' number.

Don't get me wrong. Not all clients are like this, but there really are those who are like that, and they will suck up all of your time if you allow them to, and this, in the long run, actually costs you money. Set hours, use the answering machine/voicemail, and return your clients calls during your available hours. Do not start taking calls during your personal time, evenings, or weekends. If you do it once, they will always expect it.

Other than this, if you use a daily schedule, and you schedule all of your work activities, you won't have to worry about 'over booking' yourself. However, if you don't schedule all of your work activities, it is just a matter of time before you become so loaded down with work that you find that you are working all day, all evening, and every single weekend…and you will burn out.

Your Promotional Materials

Just as you need promotional materials to sell a product, you need promotional materials to sell services as well. Here, we will discuss different types of promotional material that you will want to use to get the word out about your business.

Website – As mentioned earlier, you need a website. You can think of your website as your brochure. It should contain information about you and your service, as well as samples of your work, if that applies. Your website should be 'clean' and well-maintained, and it should also be updated as often as possible.

Samples – Usually, samples of your work will be included on your website, but you may need a separate file of samples as well. If you are a writer, you might want to include several different types of writing that you have done, and if you are a graphical designer or web designer, again, you will want various styles to show prospective clients. A writer should never use past work that he or she has done for clients as samples for prospective clients.

Business Cards – Everyone who is in business needs business cards. Always keep some cards with you for a little offline advertising, and hand them out to new people you meet – even if you don't think that they will ever need your services. The chances are good that at some point they will know somebody who needs the services that you offer.

Sales Letters/Packets – Depending on the service that you offer, and how you communicate with prospective clients, you may want to have a sales letter or an information packet ready to be mailed out. This may be nothing more than a sales email as well.

Online Profiles – Take advantage of Web 2.0 and social networking sites. Join up, and get your profile up for the entire world to see. Make sure that you provide a link to your service website!

Articles – Writing and submitting articles will help to drive traffic to your website. Articles do not have to be overly long, but they do need to pertain to the service that you offer, without turning into a sales letter. Hire a ghostwriter for this if you are not a writer yourself.

Text Ads – If you will be advertising through pay-per-click programs or ezines, you will need several good text ads ready to go. This is not necessary, however, if you will not be using these types of advertising methods.

Resources

Freelance Sites:

Rent A Coder – http://www.rentacoder.com

ScriptLance – http://www.scriptlance.com

Guru – http://www.guru.com

Elance – http://www.elance.com

iFreelance – http://www.ifreelance.com

Payment Systems:

VersaCheck – http://www.versacheck.com

PayPal – http://www.paypal.com

2CheckOut – http://www.2checkout.com

NetTeller - https://www.neteller.com

Google CheckOut - http://checkout.google.com

Web Hosting:

HostGator – http://www.hostgator.com

GoDaddy – http://www.godaddy.com

Host Monster – http://www.hostmonster.com

Domain Names:

GoDaddy – http://www.godaddy.com

Register – http://www.register.com