

“I wasn’t prepared for freelancing, but I accepted it and harnessed it” – Shreya Pattar

Freelancing was serendipitous for me. I didn’t know until a few years ago that I would be a freelancer because I had never really thought of it. But a series of events led me down this road, and I’m so glad that I did.

In September 2018, I moved to Ireland to study at Trinity College Dublin. In the same month, I met the former CEO of LinkedIn, Jeff Weiner, at an event in college. I asked him how I as a student could leverage LinkedIn, which led him to check my LinkedIn profile. Jeff asked me about my dream job, and told me to be very specific about what I want in life. That two-minute conversation meant a lot to me.

That very night, I wrote a post about meeting Jeff, which went viral overnight. Over the next three days, my post garnered over 1.5 million views and 14,000 likes, landing me my first for freelancing clients. And that’s how I became a freelancer. It appeared as if all these individual events were pearls, and I was the string running through them, holding them together.

Inexperience is usually abhorred but in my case, it sent me on an exploratory journey in freelancing. Challenges were many, as I was a full-time student too. As a student of Literature and Philosophy, I had a lot of books to read and essays to write, and freelancing, in the initial stages, seemed like a pleasant distraction that was paying me. More importantly, I was enjoying the entire process of freelancing viz lead generation, prospecting, sales calls, writing, and successfully completing the work.

In the first few months, the main challenges about freelancing were just understanding how to get things done. I had prospects messaging me, I had calls to attend, I had some clients to write for, but I didn't really know how to make it work. More importantly, I was concerned about how I could sustain it long-term. Swinging between elation and helplessness; crying and laughing; fearing and wondering; and by trial and error and preserving, I started to make freelancing work for me. I understood what really mattered while freelancing – providing real value to my clients and valuing myself and my work as a writer.

Focusing on creating authentic and credible brands for my clients helped me in making a brand for myself. I completely committed myself to grow a community on LinkedIn, and just being consistent with all the content I create. My personal brand, which was something I was building without realising it, was showing me much larger returns than I could ever imagine. Just committing to LinkedIn for almost 2 years has completely changed my life and my freelancing career.

What makes freelancing exciting is that it has low entry barriers: there are no educational, age, grade or geographical barriers. This also means that freelancing is very crowded, especially at the entry-level and you need to grit your teeth and grind it out till you succeed.

Yes, freelancing is challenging and painful too. The most difficult part of freelancing is its inherent ruthlessness and the focus it demands on the quality of work or productivity. Yet, I find freelancing highly rewarding because it is experiential and there are no hacks or tutorials that really teach you freelancing.

A curious aspect of freelancing is that it's very helpful for youngsters because it may let you get away with your inexperience. People will not hold it against you if you fail. Also, in freelancing, the cost of failure is relatively very

low. After all – freelancing is you leveraging your talent and skill using time. It is not dependent on location, commute time, office space, formal attire etc.

Another interesting aspect about freelancing is that its scalability is by networking. The domain experience you may be lacking can be solved by on-boarding the domain expert.

As a student, freelancing allows you to:

- Be visible and create your own brand
- Improve your employment opportunities
- Have a portfolio instead of a biodata
- Have real-world achievements under real-world conditions, along with academic certifications
- Create something which the other person values and are willing to pay you for.

Your content is your brand and identity, and your brand and identity is your content. To anyone who wants to build a career in freelancing, I always recommend:

1. Share valuable, authentic, meaningful content
2. Commit to a platform, and share content consistently over a period of time
3. Develop patience and keep working on yourself.

These four things, when put together, have proved to be very powerful for me. If you put these things together, it will definitely prove to be very powerful for you too.

Remember – the world is uncertain and unpredictable, so is

freelancing. And the beauty of freelancing lies in harnessing, embracing and enjoying this uncertainty and unpredictability.

Are you ready for freelancing freedom?