

## Freelancing with Free Software

Ryan Gorley

>> Ryan, I just made you the presenter.

>> Hello, Ryan, I can hear you. Can you hear me? Sorry, I can't hear you. And I don't see the microphone under your avatar. Maybe you would like to log out and log in again?

>> Hello. I can't hear you. Since there are issues with this conference --

[Connection technical difficulties - platform trying to reconnect].

>> Ryan, can you unmute yourself?

>> Can you hear me?

>> Yes.

>> All right. I do see I have controls to present now. All right. Let's see.

>> Right. I thought I actually missed -- I thought, oh, no.

>> All right. I think we are all already recording. So everybody sorry for the issues. It's too bad that it happened. We'll welcome Ryan Gorley who will be talking about freelancing with free software.

>> Thank you. (Audio breaking)

So for everyone that can hear me I'll open the chat as well. All right. Let's get started. So I'm presenting on freelancing with free software. Now, before we get started (audio breaks). And then we'll get into the concepts when it comes to freelance. And finally we'll see about the looks and practice with the case study. I'm just going to keep an eye on the clock here. All right.

>> By the way, you have ten more minutes than arranged.

>> All right. What time does that look like? Is that --

>> 16:40 UTC.

>> All right. So let me just tie this here. Just some background. Who is this guy, being me, who is that to you -- let's see here. I'm going to have some fun. I'm creator and director of Freehive. I'll tell you really quickly what that means. Oh, good plans, huh? Okay. Bear with me, I'm sorry. Let's see. This is going to be the wrong screen but bear with me in just a second. Apparently if I'm doing this in Firefox I can't share a Chrome tab, a Chrome window. All right.

Well, that's not going to work. We'll try one more thing. Let's try this. I can't show you all the work we've done but I'll show you a sample. Let's see if this works because I'm getting an error when I try to share browser window.

(Video playing)

All right. So that is just a sample of the kind of work we do at Freehive. We're a multidisciplinary tech design. We do a lot of 2D animation 3D animation, really about anything. I'm also a contributor to the, Inkscape project and we started what is called an Inkscape Vectors. Some of the community side of the things I kind of organize that work in addition to my professional life. And you're joining this presentation and you don't know what Inkscape is you will find out later.

Okay. So why would someone choose to freelance? Well, there are some good reasons. I think, you know, if you have a talent and you're trying to kind of exercise that talent -- oops -- freelance is a great opportunity. It's a great way to augment income if you have a full time job. You can create your own career path. Let's say you didn't go to school and you're kind of at a dead end, well, if you develop your skills you can work in a professional level. This can give you a lot more freedom and opportunity that way. Freelancing is a way to realize your own vision. That's one of the reasons I started Freehive. I had a certain way I wanted to do things and this gives me the opportunity to do that. Freehive has grown beyond freelancing but it applies the same.

Be your own boss. I put that on there so I can cross it off. Do not go into freelancing to be your own boss. What happens is you go from having one boss to having a thousand bosses. So that is not a reason to go into freelance. So there you go.

What do I mean by free software? I'm sure that's easy to know what that means. We means free as in freedom, and not free as in beer. So it's basically a term that captures software that is licensed in a way that respects basically your individual liberty. You're able to use it freely, you're able to do a lot more with it freely. Oftentimes, it's associated with a license that if you need to change it you need to keep it free. This is a big topic. We can dive into this if there's some questions. Some terms you might see around this open source. Some people will say this with the acronym of FOSS. I always laugh when I say that. People can call it whatever they want. Open source software. Technically software can be open and not free. So just be careful when you use that term. I would probably avoid it in a company of people that don't like that.

Why use free software? That is a question -- I've spoken on this elsewhere and this is the part in the presentation where if you can't hear leave a note in the chat because I want to make sure that I'm not -- am I still okay?

>> You're video is off by the way.

>> Oh, okay. I can turn my video back on. Okay. You can see my face. I turned it off to give you more real estate but there it is again. So why free software? I left this slide blank. There's a lot of reasons why free software. I have a background in not only design but in marketing and business. And one of the things, good or evil, businesses are businesses. And the vin diagram of the interest and interest of the customers overlap but to varying degrees. And what kind of pushed me into the space was some changes from the Adobe ecosystem. I've between using that since two or three. At some point they stopped that you could buy the license but you could use that software

in perpetuity. Forever. Now, what happened that creates a problem for a business. The benefit of that software and advancement and what happens eventually is that your upgrades becomes less valuable to people. So if your model is such that it offers perpetual license then eventually people are going to stop upgrading. That's not good for a business that needs to make money. So what Adobe ended up doing is shifting everything to a cloud-based model. And then eventually they cut off all perpetual license and then they had a lawsuit and they said you can't use those perpetual licenses anymore.

So they basically got everyone on the hook and kind of addicted to monthly subscription of 55 USD and that really didn't rub me well. I was pretty irritated by that. I mean, I had already been exploring free software but that was the straw that really broke the camel's back for me. So this followed the same practice -- sorry, I'm afraid I'm talking too slowly -- but anyhow, the short of it is, as long as you're beholden to a business you're not entirely sure if you're going to be in alignment with your business. So you'll see things how it happened with Adobe.

On the flip side, that's kind of the negative case. On the positive case, free software is community created software. And if you think about it that way it opens up all kinds of potential. The benefit is you're part of that community as a user. And you can have an influence on where that software goes and what it becomes in a way that you can't in a commercial space. Now, there are some catches -- it's not just, hey, just post my feature request on the forum and somebody will take the time to make this for me. It's more complicated than that.

But in essence, I think it offers the ability as a designer. Not just as an individual but as a creative industry to have the say about what your tomorrow is. And I think that's good. Lastly that we'll talk about now, it is free to use but it comes with the whole Spider-man saying, with great freedom comes with great responsibility. It only survives if you give back. Now, the benefit is you're not just giving back to yourself, you're giving back to the world. Free software is made available to anybody. I would have had, you know, and in the spectrum of opportunities -- I'm not saying I'm on the lower end of the spectrum. But the opportunities were somewhat limited to me to purchase software. I didn't have free software and I was younger. I was fortunate to have mentors and peers that were able to get that and introduced me to those things. But it's good for the world. I'll leave it at that. We can come back to it later.

Okay. So some concepts. We'll try to speed through these. I think I have -- my goal is to leave enough time for questions because I'm not sure where the interest in this audience lie. All right. Now, choosing a discipline. This may be worded poorly, but just to give you an idea there's a lot of different avenues that one can go down. Graphic design I think people are familiar with. Brand image and logo design. Not every logo designer is a great graphic designer. That can go into display to UI/UX. That can be thrown together. That has to do with app interfaces. Application interfaces primarily. UX is user experience. It's more of the why than the visual part. Illustration, there's illustration photography those are subsets with a lot of practices. Web designing, motion graphics, 2D and 3D. I'll leave at that. This side is about developing your skills. I personally studied architecture. Now, that is a design discipline and it had a huge influence on me on whatever I call myself designer now. But it is not a prerequisite. This is really a meritocracy. That is one of the things I love about it. But you may want to go to school to get more of the conceptual elements. But the real art and art I think a lot of it is in practice. And that doesn't require a degree. But we'll skip that.

Building a workstation. I'm not going to focus on this but one thing I want to emphasize is that free software is available from the ground up. You may have a computer already with Windows, but if you don't, you can start getting into this and teaching this. And that's made possible because of free and open source operating systems down to the level of what we -- Kernel. So you probably heard of Linux. I'll be quick. But Linux is the Kernel. Think of the Kernel in an Apple. It's the core of an operating system. It's basically the part that helps the hardware know what to do. I'm not describing that very eloquently but it's speaking to the specific hardware for your machine.

Then on top of that within the space of Linux operating systems, this is a new concept. There aren't different you flavors of Windows. The same with MAC OS. It's just MAC OS. It's how to implement all the pieces that come on top. You're going to be confronted with different distributions and within that you're going to have different desktops and different things but basically different ways in which you're going to navigate things. So that can be a little bit confusing but it's also really awesome because you get to pick. So I won't say the name, the name of this project that I'm doing this video on, GNOME, as we will determine from this provides a very good GNOME shell. Which is a very way to navigate your desktop.

Repositories. So this is another thing to understand about your Linux system. This is the collection of software that they curate, they make sure it's updated. And you can go to whatever store and download those. Repository is maintained by your distribution or depending on the distribution. Sometimes the software is updated very regularly, sometimes it's not. So there's different arguments. We won't get into that.

Additionally, there's these cool ways to install software, Flatpak is one. Snap, app images, but there are ways that you can just install and have an additional repository that has different ways of running a software in your computer. So that's what a repository is. Packages we don't need to get into but it's basically the collection of all the bits to get an application running. So there are some basic terms that you might run into.

And anyone can correct me at the end of this if I've misspoken. Okay. Oh, boy. I'm going to breeze because I want to show you this in practice. So the free software that's available. Inkscape, Inkscape has a vector graphic editor which is mathematically generated. So you zoom in to a vector graphic it never gets clear. But Inkscape is incredibly valuable. This is a website layout that I've done.

Blender is a 3D rendering application. It also has a non-linear video editing component. It also has visual effects compositing. Hopefully I'll get to show you.

Gimp is a photo editor. Everyone knows what Photoshop is. So Gimp is an editor. Krita is similar to Gimp. I use Gimp for photo editing. Scribus, this is another thing you need to know about free software. No one knows how it can be pronounced. Scribus is within the suite of tools. I have used Inkscape for that but if you're designing anything large with a lot of pages and you need color, CMYK color or output this is the tool now. I'm getting really meadow with this because this is a screen shot of the presentation that you're watching in the presentation.

All right. So here's other noteworthy applications that I use. Finding your first client. Okay. Big topic really quickly. You can just think of networking and making connections with people. Networking, public advertising, content marketing, that's really a term that has to do with writing

blogs and Google search. And through some degree through social eats. Directories, you know, there are millions of different places to post your portfolio and then marketplaces is where you manage the customer relationship. Of all these I would focus really hard on networking. It seems cliché but the most valuable clients that you'll get in the long run are people that you have a strong relationship with. It's a little hard with the current pandemic but it is incredibly important. And I can't overstate how important that is.

Paid advertising can get expensive. Content marketing can make a long time. Some people make a lot of money on the marketplaces. I don't really like them. It might work for you but I'm not in love with the model. I think oftentimes it pushes the value depending on how they price it out. I'll talk about pricing strategy here now.

>> Ryan, quick reminder, we have ten more minutes.

>> Okay. My goodness. I'll be really fast because I want to show you some working. What should you charge? You should charge what somebody is willing to pay? Just don't get that out of your head. It's not immoral for somebody to pay two thousand dollars. It's not a function of what you think your value is in terms of time. Now, the trick is figuring out how to match, how to determine what the value is of what your customer might have.

I'm not going to go into this, hourly rate, and all, there are different ways that you can bill. Proposals and contracts. I will say this. Never, never, never start a project with a new client without first collecting partial payment. Never. Never. It never works out. Okay. Well, it can work out but the one time you make an exception, just don't do it. If people are serious to work with you they'll be serious to put in a third. You'll waste a lot less time.

Accounting and taxes. Okay. Track your income. Don't put your money in your own personal bank account. Keep it separate. Just forget the stupid idea of write-offs. Don't buy something because you're going to get write-offs. Get professional help early is what I recommend. It can be expensive but at least you're in the U.S. but you'll be thanking yourself in the long-term. And then lastly, make more money than you spend. I shouldn't have to say it, but don't just buy stuff. Try to spend as little as you can.

Okay. Nextcloud is great. Look into it. It's awesome. All right. Let me see if I can share a little bit about this. All right. This is a company that we have done a website for. Let me see if I can get this work. I'm a little worried. Yay. It works. Okay. So this is a real client. We actually haven't done the development work on this site. But we did all the web design and all of the content in collaboration with the client and whatever they do. This is a company that makes a couple of products that kind of helps you to have a personal cloud. So it's kind of cool. Everything on here was done from free and open source software from this video down to the animations down to this. The background images -- just so you know there are no -- I shouldn't say this in public. None of the product images any of these lifestyle images on this entire website are real. They're just people that we put into this. I can design everything.

So this is a cool client. What I wanted to show you is a recent project that we did. Let's see. Let me share this with you real quick. So this is an app store animation that we -- they started kind of wanting to closely mimic someone else's app store thing and this happens as a designer and a good designer will say, okay, let's do that but let's make it better. So this is an animation that kind of

came out from their desired application. And I'm going to show you real quick what some of the places -- this is going to be really quick. Okay. I mentioned in the list of application one is AT-SPI. This is where we take a photo and then we're going to bring it into Blender. Okay. So here's Blender. You can kind of see how we kind of placed the digital product in there, do a little work. And then voila. It looks super easy, but it's not super easy. So in this case, this is created in 3D. Now to create that particular video we rendered out some stills. Sorry, we took flat images and kind of laid them out. Let me show you real quick how that looks.

I was going to pull this up in Gimp so you could see that's where we're cropping all these backgrounds from. So you can see here these are just flat plains cropped in Gimp. And you saw a little preview of this earlier but we have this sketch out. The interface of the phone that you see on the video, it wasn't high enough resolution from the mock ups. We're working off of mock ups because technically that app isn't on the market yet. So we had to create a lot of those in Inkscape.

Now, to close -- and I'm sorry I can't go into this in more detail --

>> We've got two more minutes. If you want I can read you questions.

>> Yes, I'll make my closing remark and then I'll have you read me some questions. So creative software, free and open source software it creates all kinds of amazing things for a freelancer. The kind of things I'm doing now I wouldn't have imagine doing it with other software. I will say in the end I have never had a client ask me what software I'm use, at least in a sense of, why aren't you using Adobe. But if you want to create a freelance career do it with free software. And with that I will close by, let's see, what is the answer? Guh Nome. All right.

>> First question is when you say 12 bosses are your referring to your client's customers?

>> Yes, your clients all become your boss. And the dirty secret -- well, not the dirty secret, the sin is to tell your clients that you have other clients. They don't ever like it. It is a bit challenging so don't get it into it thinking I'm going to escape a lot of people.

>> Next one is did you make this slide in Scribus?

>> Yes.

>> Any hints with doing the slides through there?

>> I did them through there because it was long enough that I needed master pages to do it rapidly. That's the only tip I have. I'll be honest, Scribus is a little bit challenging. You have to get used to it.

>> The third one is when evaluating tools for work, do you have a system to balance ethics, freedom, anything you cannot replace?

>> I try to replace all of them. And I had a backup Adobe for like a year and a half before I realized I wasn't using it. So I haven't had to use really anything. Now, within the cloud there are a couple of things I use for hosting all the cloud infrastructure I use CloudRun. But it's a great way to manage this. I do use that and I still use it. I'm trying to think if there's anything else. I'm not saying you won't ever have to.

>> All right. So thank you very much, Ryan. And if there are any more questions maybe you can reach out in the chat.

>> Yes. And I'll say this, I'm not real active on social media but if you are on Twitter or Mastodon please follow me on there. So that's my final plug-in. Thank you for having me here.

>> Thank you so much and sorry for the technical issues again. We'll take 10 minutes.

[Break]