

Freelancing and Entrepreneurship Transcript

This is a transcript of the seminar, edited slightly for easy reading.

You can find the audio version at www.writershuddle.com/seminars/june2014.

Ali: Hi, I'm Ali Luke and this is the June seminar for Writers' Huddle, Freelancing and Entrepreneurship.

I'm really thrilled to have Thursday Bram with us today. She's a freelance writer and also a business consultant from Portland in Oregon, and I met Thursday – gosh, about four years ago now. I think she's one of the very first people I met at my very first blogging conference. So we go back a little way.

Thursday is someone who really knows her stuff and who has loads of really great advice and experience to share with us today. She runs [Hyper Modern Writing](#), with a team of writers, and I'm hoping to ask her a little bit about that as we go through.

I'll put links to her sites and so on with the seminar notes so that you can find her online and just check out some of what she's doing.

So welcome Thursday, it's great to have you.

Thursday: Thank you for having me.

How Thursday Got Started as a Freelancer

Ali: I figured we could start with maybe you giving us a quick outline of your writing career. Because I know that for a lot of freelancers it's something they get into perhaps after being a bit disillusioned with the 9 to 5 world. But you got started way back in high school, I think?

Thursday: Yeah. When I was in high school my mom was running a magazine out of her house, and I had the option of doing the dishes or writing for the magazine. And I really hate doing dishes.

It worked out pretty well. But from there it just turned into something that I did in college, and I had held down a few of those 9 to 5 jobs, but I basically have never not been writing, at least on the side.

Ali: It's really good that you found your passion quite early on, because I know some people come to writing after quite a while of not knowing that that's going to be what they want to do.

Within the Huddle, we've got some people who are quite young writers in their teens, and then some people who are maybe retiring from a regular day job and then looking at doing some freelancing in retirement. So a huge range of different life stages.

Breaking Into Freelance Writing

Ali (cont): Something I wanted to ask you, and maybe this is a tricky thing to answer, is whether it's harder or easier to break into freelance writing these days?

Thursday: It's a little bit more complicated, I think. There are more options, but at the same time, there are more things that you need to know than when I got started.

I had a very easy in. I was living in the same house as the magazine editor that gave me my break. But when I went to start working with clients beyond people who I happened to be related to, I did have some clips. So that really did benefit me.

I still had to prove myself. I had to prove that just because my last name was the same didn't mean that there was some nepotism involved.

But now there's a lot more options for getting your work out there than just print magazines or a website that you've set up yourself. So it's a little bit easier, I think, in some ways, to prove that other people like your work before you approach an editor. But in other ways, you have to actually go and learn a bunch of things before you can take advantage of some of those strategies.

Ali: I think something that I've found as a freelancer, even over the last six years since I started freelance writing is that there seem to be more and more people doing it. And I guess there's more and more demand for writing, particularly online, because there's just so much content that's being produced and consumed.

I feel like you have to do a little bit more these days to differentiate yourself from just any other good writer out there.

Thursday: Absolutely. It gets me a little bit that people say, "Oh, writing is a dying art, publishing is dying," all these things. And then I see all these people looking to hire writers. I see all these writers putting together books for the Kindle platform and things like that that – there were 250,000 new books published in the US last year. **It's phenomenal how much writing opportunity is out there right now.**

Ali: I agree, and I think, as writers, particularly as freelancers, we need to be a bit flexible and maybe think slightly outside writing magazine articles, like you got started, or writing for a major publishing house. Because there are a lot of different – but just as great and probably more lucrative – opportunities out there.

Thursday: Absolutely.

First Steps in a Freelancing Career

Ali: So something I was hoping you could walk us through a little bit is the very early stages of a freelancing career. Because I think this is the trickiest bit for most people – just that hurdle of getting started and that really steep learning curve.

So imagine that I'm coming to you for advice, and I'm just starting out freelancing. I've maybe done a bit of writing, I know I enjoy it, but I haven't got anything published, so I haven't even got any clips like you were talking about a minute ago. So what would you advise me? What first few steps should I take?

Thursday: I fundamentally believe in the importance of having your own website right off the bat – especially considering how cheap it is to set up a website.

You can set up a WordPress site with a custom theme for under \$100 dollars including hosting and your domain name. And that lets you – especially if you add a blog – at least put a little bit of your writing some place where you can refer people back to it.

From there it depends on what kind of writing you want to do. Just because there are so many different options, **the key thing to remember across all of those options is that you need somebody *else* to say that you're a good writer.** It can't just be you saying, "I've written these three blog posts and I know that they're great."

So if you want to get into freelance blogging, for instance, I would go out and write some guest posts, and yes, you're writing for free the first couple of times around but you don't necessarily have to write for free for very long. **You just need a couple of examples that an editor or a site owner has looked over and said, "I like this enough to put it on my own site."**

You don't have to tell anybody that you weren't paid for that work. The same goes for if you want to do something that's more magazine-oriented. You can talk to some magazines that take work on spec, or take work and don't pay writers. You can get those clips pretty quickly.

If you're more interested in something like copywriting, it's a little bit harder, but there are always non-profits that are willing to take on a beginning writer and give them a project because they don't have the budget to pay.

And I'm not suggesting work for free for very long, **I'm suggesting one or two or maybe three projects in a portfolio that you can then turn around and start using for paying work,** that you can leverage into showing people.

It's a form of social proof – an editor has looked at this and said that it was good. So those are like the first two steps: getting the website and getting a couple of (even if they're not paying) clients, as it were.

Ali: That definitely tallies with my own experience. I did a little bit of work for a non-profit before I even had my website up. But pretty soon, I'd got a website in place, I'd done some work for free, and then a few little paid gigs just gradually built up.

And I think that's really good advice for anybody. **I find it hard to see how you could be taken seriously as a freelancer without a website.** Just because it is so cheap and easy to set one up, and I think not having a website and not having a professional online presence would definitely knock your chances.

Thursday: Absolutely. And people are going to search for you online before they work with you, and that means you have to be online. Otherwise, how are they going to find you? How are they going to decide, this person is actually for real and I want to give them money?

Common Mistakes That Freelancers Make

Ali: Exactly. So let's think a bit more broadly now, not just about people who are starting out but freelancers who might be a bit more experienced. I'm wondering what mistakes, in terms of business, you see cropping up again and again. Whether that's, say, handling cash flow badly or not having a website or something like that.

One of the things I admire about you is that you've got a really good business mind as well as a good writing mind. And I think that is something that writers struggle with sometimes, to handle the business side, even if they're really brilliant writers.

Thursday: Time and time again, **I always recommend taking at least a basic bookkeeping class.** Because the average writer doesn't have that much of an accounting or bookkeeping background, and knowing how money works is just so crucial for a freelance business.

There's taxes, for instance – and you're lucky, you're in the UK, your tax system is not quite the mess that ours is here in the US, but you still have to know what you're doing and what forms to fill out and when you need to fill them out by, because it doesn't matter what country you live in, they like their taxes

and they want to get them. If you screw up taxes that's a lot worse than screwing up an invoice for a client.

I have so many horror stories of freelancers who hadn't figured out their taxes. I met one woman who's five years into her freelancing career, she's very well established, but somewhere she had heard that you don't have to pay taxes for the first five years you're in business.

Ali: Oh dear.

Thursday: And that is in fact not true. That is very not true. So five years into her business she had this massive tax bill, she had all these problems because she didn't understand the numbers that go into a business.

Once you get into that mindset of, "This is a business, I'm going to keep my books properly," you can find some more opportunities. It took me a while even in my own business to really track my time carefully, but once I was tracking my time and keeping a close eye on what time was going into what client project, not only was I able to better price my freelance writing but I was also able to do more projects of my own on the side.

So just being very aware what you're doing both in terms of time and money, I think, are two key things for freelancers to keep in mind as they grow their businesses.

Ali: I think the time and the money are the two things that can really kill your business, if you've not planned well, if you're undercharging, you just don't have enough hours, or you've screwed up with your taxes or you've made some major mistake in terms of managing the money.

Setting Your Rates and Charging for Your Writing

Ali (cont): I guess that brings me on to pricing as a freelancer: how you set your rates, what you charge, whether you charge per project, so you'd give a quote up front for five blog posts or a page of copywriting or whatever, or whether you just charge a kind of hourly rate, and how all of that works.

Different people have different views on this, but I wondered if you could talk about what tips you have and what's worked for you?

Thursday: Sure. So personally in my business I do per-project fees. I don't do per-hour. But I do know how much I'm making per hour, just because I'm keeping track of all those numbers. And part of the reason that I do per-project is that I do have other contractors who I work with. So I don't want to be trying to figure out that, oh, this person bills at this hourly rate and this person bills at this different hourly rate, and at the end of the day I'm just entirely out of my mind.

So doing a per-project rate helps just keep everything very simple, and it also means that I can educate my clients better about our pricing. Because I know, oh, we're doing a package of 12 blog posts, it costs X every time.

It took me a little bit of time to really settle on that model, though. I had hourly work in the past, I'd done lots of per-project, I had a lot of different pricing schemes.

The thing that it really comes down to is, first of all, what are you comfortable with? How do you value the work that you're doing? Do you think of it as a purely time-based function, or is it something that you look for a lot of ways to speed up or change, or experiment with what you're doing?

Second of all, how you can educate your client about what they're paying for? So one of the things that I've noticed about my type of client and hourly pricing is that I work mostly with small business owners. And you tell them, oh, my hourly rate is \$100 per hour. And they immediately think, oh my god, this project would take me thirty hours to do, it's going to cost thousands and thousands of dollars.

They don't understand that as the freelancer, as the expert, it's only going to take me maybe five hours to do. So they don't have that understanding built in.

It's easier for my clientele for me to do a proposal that says, so the project is going to cost this precise amount and this is the result or deliverable you're going to get at the end. It's easier for me to educate my client that way.

Some clients, though, are more comfortable with hourly rates, especially if they're used to working on an hourly basis themselves. So it's a question of who do you want to work with and how do you want to work with them.

Raising Your Rates

The other thing that I would pay close attention to is, are you charging enough? Because I know so many freelancers who set a rate and then four years later they're still charging the same rate.

I increase my rates at least once a year, sometimes twice, depending on how everything else is going. First of all because costs keep going up. Second of all because I keep learning new things. I'm better now than I was a year ago, so clearly I am more expensive.

In general, especially with writers, maybe even more so than with other types of freelancers, we're not as good at understanding the value of what we're doing as we could be. We get caught up in thinking, "Oh, this is just writing, everybody can do it" – and then you just don't place as high a premium on what you're doing.

But the fact is, not everybody can do this. Not everybody understands how to use punctuation, or how to write a good headline, or any of these different elements, and they're happy to pay for it if they get the end result they want.

So make sure you're charging enough. As a general rule I try to encourage even beginner freelancers to go at least thirty dollars an hour, if not fifty. Anything below that, at least in the US, and you're going to hurt when tax time comes.

Ali: I think that's a good rule of thumb. I agree with you on project pricing versus hourly pricing. It's definitely easier for most clients to know, "This is how much I'm going to pay you," and not to have to think about how many hours will it take.

And I think also, as you say, if you're charging \$100 per hour but it's only going to take five hours, it looks more expensive to give them the hourly rate. Whereas if you just tell them per project, they don't know how many hours it will take and they don't really care.

The other thing that I've found with that is that I've got faster, particularly at blog posts, because I've written well over a thousand by now. **And you don't really want to be in a position where you're making less money per blog post because it's taking you half the time.** Although, as you say, raising your rates could deal with that.

In terms of raising rates, I don't think I've raised mine as often as I should, but when I have raised them I've just given my existing clients a bit of warning. So I've said, "In two months' time my rates are going up to this," and it's always been fine.

My rule of thumb has generally been, if I'm maxed out on client work then it's time to start charging more.

Thursday: That is a pretty clear indicator, I think. If enough people like the rate that you're at, well, clearly some people are going to be fine with raising it a little bit higher.

Ali: Exactly. I've been turning down clients for a few months now, and if it wasn't for the fact I'm planning to cut all my client work and go on maternity leave in a few months, I would be raising the rates. Right now, I just want to wrap things up and move on to some other projects, including the next baby.

Thursday: That is a project that does have a certain time commitment with it.

Ali: Yeah, that is quite a big project. Sadly, you can't charge the baby – "can I have my \$60 an hour now?"

The Role of Scarcity in Pricing

Thursday: It's also worth thinking about in terms of pricing. **If you only have a certain number of hours available, you have a good reason to be more expensive if there's more demand for your time.**

And it's also easier to get that higher price if you are able to say no, really, I only have this block of time. I'm exclusive, I'm scarce, I'm a resource that you should jump on.

Ali: I think that makes very good sense. One of the photographers I know only books in, I think, three sessions a week. Because she needs to be able to put all

her creative energy into it, she needs the time for the post-processing and so on.

I think that makes her more valuable, because it sounds like she really values her work, she can charge quite a high rate for the services because people know that she's bringing her best to it – rather than charging a bargain-basement price and then cramming her week full of so much work that she's not doing such a good job.

Thursday: Absolutely, and it sounds more professional too, because you can say, “This is what's included, this is what I know you need already.”

Ali: Exactly. I think people often worry about turning away clients, or losing a client because they can't do the work straight away.

Now sometimes people want things in a rush, but normally my clients have been happy to wait a few weeks until I have a slot for them. You know, if they really want to work with you, it's not going to be a deal-breaker that you can't do it straight away, or that it's going to be a slightly more pricey service than they might get elsewhere.

It can be hard to have that confidence when you're starting out, but I do think you need to, as you say, really put a value on yourself and your writing and realise just how much that's worth to people to whom writing does not come naturally at all.

Thursday: Absolutely. And obviously the sort of client who is going to push like that is not somebody I want to work with. They're going to be harder to work with as a client, they're going to be the type that has six drafts of revisions and wants to totally change things at the last minute, and I like reasonable clients, as a personal preference!

I'm always willing to let my clients self-select a little bit by saying, “This is the amount of time I have available, if that doesn't work for you I'm happy to recommend somebody else.”

How to Stop Working With a Client

Ali: That brings me on to something else that I struggled with myself in the past, and I certainly know it comes up for most freelancers at some point in their career.

What do you do if you've taken on a client who you decide you no longer want to work with? Maybe they're not a bad client in themselves, they're not necessarily a horrible person to work with, but you've just realised that that relationship is no longer working for you for whatever reason.

Perhaps, you're changing your direction, or the kind of work they want from you has changed a bit, or they're a nice enough person but they're phoning you up every day with the same queries over and over again, or something.

How do you break off that relationship without burning your bridges and possibly offending them?

Thursday: I like to recommend somebody who will be a better fit. Sometimes there isn't somebody who's a better fit because it isn't the best client in the world, that's really the hard part.

But if there's somebody who's a better fit, it's just a situation of, "I've really enjoyed working with you, it seems like somebody else might be able to help you a little bit better, however, I want to make sure you get exactly what you're looking for, so here's an email introduction to this other writer who's going to be a better fit."

I do try to make sure with the writer ahead of time that they want that sort of client. Just so that I'm not surprising them with it, especially if it is somebody who is incredibly difficult to work with and is a problem client, as it were.

I do try really hard to finish out a contract. It's a contract, it's a legal obligation in my mind. I may feel a little bit more willing to bring in a contractor and make less of a margin on a particular project if I really don't want to deal with somebody at that point. But once we reach a good stopping point, it's "Here are all your files, it's been nice working with you, I have this big project that

I've already been offered and I've already committed to, so I can't work with you further."

You can always find a project to commit to, you can always say, "I'm writing an ebook this quarter," and of course go write the ebook then, but bad clients are often one of my biggest motivators in going into one of my own projects.

Ali: I think that all makes really good sense. For me, as I got more experienced as a freelancer I learned to tell who would be a good fit and who might be not such a good fit.

Occasionally I've been surprised at a client who I thought was going to be a headache, you know, we actually managed to kind of settle into a really good rhythm together.

But generally, I think, as you mentioned a few minutes ago, **you can see bad clients coming**. You know, if you can tell from their initial approach that they're going to be really pushy, or they're going to want rock-bottom prices or something like that, then you can just get out of there before it even becomes a client relationship at all.

But I think all your advice on ending the relationship is great: doing it in a clear and professional manner, and if possible referring them on to someone else, which is a great thing to do when you can because it often helps out another freelancer who perhaps would really enjoy that kind of work.

Why Raising Your Rates May Not Work Here

Thursday: There is one way that I recommend not ending a relationship. Raising your rates seems like it would be a great way to get rid of somebody, but in fact it often just means that you're making more money from the same client that's still frustrating you.

While money does soothe a lot of ailments, if you're really frustrated with somebody you just have to tell them that the relationship is over.

Ali: I agree. It's not a perfect fix, and it's going to be quite awkward if you've raised your rates and they've agreed to pay the new rates, and you still want to get out.

Once or twice as a freelancer, I've felt like a job was going to be a hassle for whatever reason, it involved travelling or something, and I've just thought, okay, I'm going to quote a rate high enough that they probably won't want to take it but if they do take it, that will be really good money and I'll be happy either way.

But I think you do have to be very cautious with that.

Thursday: Absolutely. Even if the money is good, if you sat down and you thought through what you want to be doing with your business, and somebody comes to you with something that doesn't fit that, even if the money is good, try to be in a position where you can say no to those things.

Especially if you've got a clear vision of you want to be doing specific writing work, or you have projects of your own that you need to be working on in your off time or anything like that – saying no is hard but it's absolutely necessary.

Ali: And it's a skill you can learn. You know, the more you say no the easier it gets.

Thursday: Absolutely.

How Do You Find Clients as a New Freelancer?

Ali: So thinking again of the early stages as a freelancer, because I think this is where most people in the Huddle will be right now ... **when you're building up your client list, so maybe you've got one or two gigs but you've got quite a lot of time and not the clients to fill it, what would you focus on?**

There's blogging, there's social networks, there's cold-calling, there's emailing people you think would be a good prospect – there are loads of different methods that I've seen different people proclaim as the best way to do this. But how would you advise building up a client list?

Thursday: So the first thing I would really recommend is actually figuring out who you want as a client, rather than just that shotgun approach of “Let's try everything and see who comes in.”

It's really tempting to take on everything that comes around, but in the long term that's bad for a freelancer. **Getting more money is often associated with being a specialist: doing one thing really, really well.**

And there are lots of ways to expand once you have that one thing. But figuring out who wants that one thing is a really good first step because then you can go to wherever they are and promote.

So if you want to do, say, press releases, going and spending all your time on Twitter is actually a good strategy because there are a ton of PR people on Twitter.

But if you want to do newsletters, there are fewer clients for newsletters on a place like Twitter. So a lot of small businesses like newsletters.

Small business owners, unless they are running a tech company or something very marketing-oriented, probably aren't on Twitter. They're on places like LinkedIn. So spending time on LinkedIn might be valuable. But they also go look for resources a lot, so spending some time building up a blog or a newsletter of your own that targets that market makes sense.

It's just a question of who's most likely to pay for what you want to do, and where do they spend most of their time.

I also would really think about where you're spending your time offline. Networking has done so much for my business. I've gotten so many clients, not necessarily directly from going to an event and meeting all the people there, but because I built those connections at an event and they followed up – they'd recommended a friend to me, or they've passed my name up further into their company.

So those sorts of connections are really valuable. I try to always go to a couple of conferences a year and I try to go to at least one networking event a month. And I've been doing that sort of level of networking for years at this point.

And it pays off, if you're going to the places where those ideal clients are going to be. **But all of this comes back to knowing who you're trying to reach and what's the best way to reach them – where do they spend their time?**

So that's how I focus my marketing efforts, and how I really recommend someone who's new to freelancing to market themselves.

Ali: I think that's incredibly sensible, and it's about focusing on the broad strategy – who are your ideal clients, where do they hang out – rather than getting too bogged down in the tactics you could use, like building up a big Twitter following or having a great Facebook page or attending an event every night.

It's easy to just throw yourself into something when you're new without perhaps thinking through, okay, what's the bigger picture here?

Thursday: Absolutely. And this sort of approach is, honestly, a lot harder than going on to Twitter and just trying to get as many followers as possible. But it's what'll work for a business long term.

It's weird to think about it, but Twitter isn't even a decade yet. And it might be this fundamental part of how we do business today, but is it going to actually be around ten years from now? It's really hard to guess. So building up a more comprehensive strategy, I think, is really going to be more valuable for most people.

Ali: I'm with you. And it's all about the people, not just the numbers or something like that. When you're going to face-to-face networking events you really can build some strong connections.

I've found, when I've been to blogging conferences in particular, I've maybe not met loads and loads of new people, partly because I suck at that, but I've built stronger relationships with people who I perhaps had a passing connection with online.

I've definitely had specific pieces of work come out of specific meetings I've had at conferences and events and things. So it's an important thing to do, even for writers who like me are maybe not 100% confident kind of getting out there. Like anything, the more you do it the easier it gets.

Gaining Potential Clients' Trust

Thursday: Absolutely. And one thing that I think it's easy to lose sight of with all these online options is that clients have to be able to trust you. And they're

more likely to trust you if they've actually met you in person and they're confident that in fact you aren't, you know, a dog with a keyboard on the internet. Because how do you know that somebody on the internet isn't just actually a pet who has learned to type pretty well?

Ali: Yeah, or you don't know that they won't just take your money and run off with it and never be heard of again. But when you've met somebody, you're reassured they actually exist, they seem nice, they're genuine.

Building a Team of Writers

Ali: So I just wanted to ask one more question before we wrap up, because this really interests me. I don't know if it's a direction I'd see myself going in personally, but I can definitely see it is how writing businesses tend to grow, and I've seen other writers do this.

And that's the fact that you work alongside a team of writers through Hyper Modern Writing. I'm curious about, firstly what it's like to manage a team, in terms of you're not doing all the writing work, you're outsourcing it or delegating it to other writers. And then secondly, how do you make sure that the quality of the work is up to the standards that you yourself would have?

Thursday: Well, turning my business into an agency has been an interesting process. And I'd always known that I wanted to grow my business. Some people, the best thing possible is for them to do their work and be independent and just hand over the project and be done.

That's not my temperament. I like having my fingers in lots of different pies, and controlling lots of things. So I grew my business in the way that made sense to me.

It happened a little bit organically. I'd have a project that I didn't necessarily have time for, but I knew somebody who did have time for it, so I'd grab them and I'd say, all right, I'll manage the project, I've got all the bits and pieces already here, and you just do the work.

And there is a question of quality, but one of the things I did right from the beginning is **I read a ton of things, I know whose writing I like, I know who has**

a good style, who does pretty well in terms of even just what's on their personal blog.

So I had expectations of what people would be able to do, even going in. And that's helped control quality quite a bit.

I'm also a little OCD about editing, I go through everything and make sure that it matches what I expect. But it's kind of like running a multi-person blog or running a newspaper or something like that. It's just having a process for doing everything.

It's having a style guide that everybody's expected to adhere to, and a workflow that everybody knows is going to be the same over and over again. That's the only way to do this sort of project, or this sort of agency.

Because otherwise everything's different every time – you're just going to go crazy. There's no question. **So I built up these processes, and just keep doing a little bit more here, or trying a new service to offer my clients there, and it's just this ongoing experiment, but it keeps growing.**

Ali: That's really cool. I think it ties in with what we've been saying already about being businesslike as a writer. Not just getting so caught up in the writing itself that you can't look at the slightly bigger picture of how things fit together as part of a business.

Having a process is certainly vital if you're working with other writers, as a team or even perhaps as volunteers on your blog or something. But I think it's something that individual freelancers can do as well.

So maybe an individual might have a process for, "This is what happens when I take on a new client," or "This is a checklist for writing a blogpost" – it could be very simple.

I don't think I have as many processes and checklists as I should, but when I have created them and used them consistently, that's definitely been helpful because it's stopped me forgetting all those little things and stopped me having to reinvent the wheel with every single new client.

Thursday: Absolutely. I think that there's also a little bit of a question of tools. Like, I try not to obsess over tools, despite the fact that there are always new

things on the internet that I'd love to try out, but I think the fact that I use tools at all is an improvement.

When a lot of freelance writers start out, an Excel spreadsheet is about as good as it's going to get. **And it's part of the growth process to try out project management tools, see if you can do something a little bit better in terms of managing calendars and using time-tracking tools.**

There are so many relatively inexpensive options now that there's no good reason *not* to try out some of these things.

Ali: That's a great tip. And sometimes, just finding a technological solution that works for you – or even if the way you work best is to keep everything on paper or something – it's just finding the system that fits with your brain and your workflow and the kind of work that you're doing.

It really can make everything a lot easier just to feel on top of everything and to make sure nothing's slipping through the cracks.

Thursday: And some of these tools also enforce a bit of process on you that you have to go in and you have to set up a new client, and that's okay, that's something that I have to do, I might as well make a list and go through all of it.

I use [Asana](#) for project management at this point, and it's free to use up to ten or twelve users on a team. But it works for individual use too, and you can copy old projects, and that's all you necessarily have to do to start having these systems. You did a project, and this is going to be a very similar project, just copy it over and start from there.

Ali: I've used a few different project management systems with different clients, depending on what they wanted to use. There's a lot out there, and it's just a case of finding something that works for you. As a freelancer, when you're working with clients and they're going to be using the same system, I guess you have to think about what works for them.

Thursday: One of the things that I think of as more advanced freelancing is, it's okay to tell clients that they're going to use the system that you tell them to.

Ali: That's a good point – I should try that!

Thursday: You're the expert, you're the experienced writer, and you know what tools make sense. This is one of the reasons that I recommend WordPress for my clients.

There are clients who come to me with different content management systems, and I say, "No, I'm not working on that site. It's using a content management system that I'd rather see burn. So if you want to work with me, you have to switch to WordPress."

I try not to be a real pain about the whole thing. Sometimes, there's a reason they have to use a particular system. But at the end of the day if you're the expert you should be able to say, "Okay, this is the best software, this is the best tool, this is how we do project management to give you the best result, and you're paying me to tell you how to do this. You're not just paying me for a blog post, you're paying me for the whole process. So let's do things my way."

Ali: I think this is all about being confident as a writer. And being confident in yourself, within your business. And not feeling that you have to take on every client that comes your way, as we were saying before, or bend to what the client might want, even if what they want is just based on how their friend told them in the pub that this was the way to do a website, or something.

Sometimes people have quite misguided ideas of what's going to work for their business.

Thursday: Yeah, I've come to really hate friends in pubs and cousins who do web design. Both categories are people that I just want to ban my clients from talking to.

It is definitely a confidence thing. And I think that specialising does help in that area too, once you build up a little bit of an expertise in a specific part of writing you might have a bit more confidence. **There's just something about knowing something that other people don't know that helps in making you feel a little bit more confident.**

Ali: I think that's true, and my experience with pretty much all of my clients, actually, is that people are quite often glad for you to take the lead. You know, they kind of want you to tell them, "This is what you need, X number of blog

posts,” or “you need to do this with your newsletter,” or “This is the reason why such-and-such isn't quite working.”

They're coming to you as the expert, and they're perfectly happy for you to tell them what they need. And I think the mistake I made earlier on, and will probably continue to make, is to sit back and rely on my clients telling me what they wanted and needed, and they often didn't really know exactly.

Thursday: Right. And there are some clients you can find who are a good fit if that's your personal style. Working in agencies can often be laid back from the leadership perspective. But if you can build up that confidence, you know, even if you don't take on that many clients who need that sort of leadership, it's always going to be a benefit for your business.

Ali: Absolutely. So I think we should call it a wrap, because there's so much that we've covered, and I don't want this to be too overwhelming for people who are just coming to freelancing. But thank you so much for joining us, Thursday. It's been really cool to get to chat to you again.

Thursday: Absolutely. Thank you for having me.

Ali: Oh, you're very welcome. I'll put links to your sites in the seminar notes so people will be able to find you online, see a bit more of the work that you do, and read some of your great blog posts as well.

Thursday: Sure. And I'm always happy to answer questions, email or Twitter – on the internet.

Ali: Awesome. Thanks so much.

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