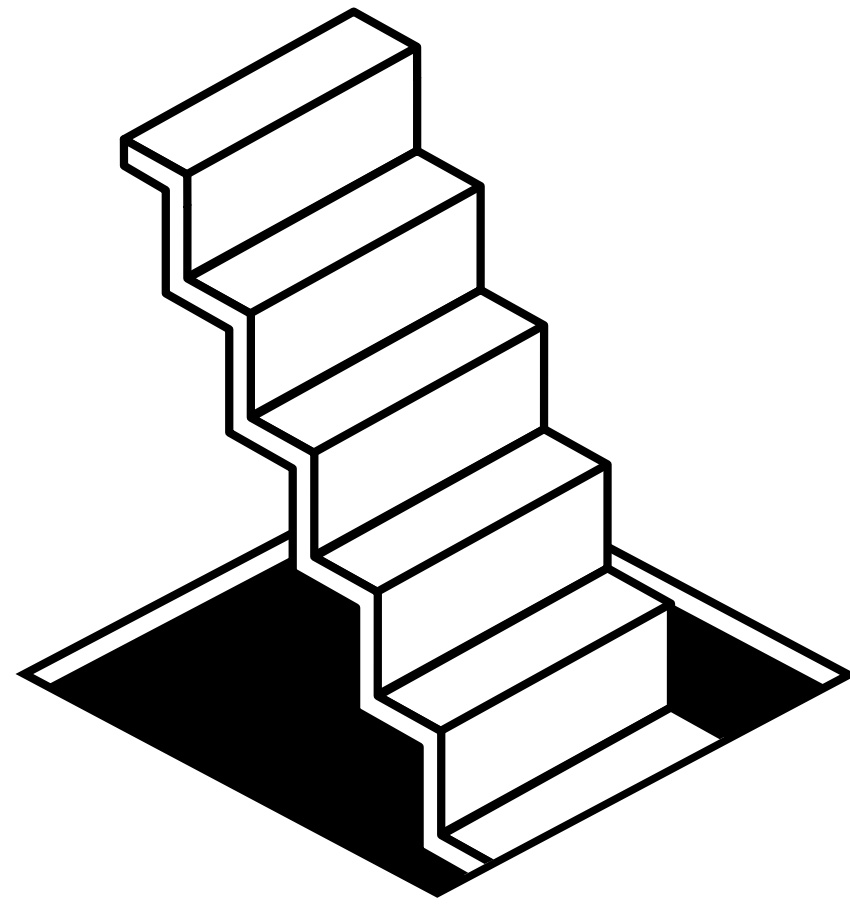


E	C	R
X	R	E
P	E	P
L	A	E
O	T	A
R	E	T
E		

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO FEARLESS FREELANCING

VOLUME I





I **Common Myths About Freelancing**

Lydia Pawlowsky

II **On a Limb: Is Branching Out Necessary for Success?**

Sean Minogue

III **Creativity is the Best Routine**

Lydia Pawlowsky

IV **Channel Your Inner Boss**

Sean Minogue

V **How to Deal With Difficult Clients**

Lydia Pawlowsky



COMMON MYTHS ABOUT FREELANCING

CHAPTER I – *by Lydia Pawlowsky*

Most creative professionals, at some point in their lives, have at least considered the option of quitting their office jobs to instead work as a freelancer. Freelance professionals are not permanently employed by one company, and therefore are “free” to take work on a project-by-project or client-by-client basis. Whether full-time or part-time, what is most

EXPLORE. CREATE. REPEAT. – *by 4ormat.com*

enticing about freelanced work is the self-employment, which some people believe to be synonymous with “total freedom”. This is not always the case. We at ECR have put together a short list to dispel (and occasionally prove) some common myths about freelancing.

1) I can work from anywhere, at any time of day.

This is often the biggest factor in deciding to go freelance, and for the most part, it's a completely legitimate statement to make about your freelance career. What people don't often account for in their rationale is the fact that more often than not it is some higher power determining your work hours – whether it's your client, your contractual employer, a deadline, or that mountain of paperwork you have to get around to. Yes, you can work from home, yes your hours can be flexible, but your hours ultimately have to be realistic. If you want to start work at 11 PM at night and end in the wee hours of the morning, then consider freelancing for clients overseas – because if anyone in the same time zone wants to get ahold of you and hash out some minuscule detail of their design, or ask some questions about a commissioned

painting, it'll be pretty hard to do when neither of you are available at the other's convenience.

With that in mind, people often assume that “freelance” is synonymous with “always available” – it's not. Working from home, you get caught up in the mindset of “well I can do this one thing for them, I'm not terribly busy right now” – but the reason you aren't terribly busy is probably because you haven't separated Work from Life, and now you have little to none of the latter. It's essential to set, and adhere to, personal limits regarding your work hours. While when you work may vary day to day, pick a set number of hours you would like to work each day. From there, take one or two of those hours and dedicate it to doing your accounting and bookkeeping. File your invoices, make sure you got paid, plan what you need to work on next – do this consistently enough that it becomes routine instead of a massive headache.

When breaking up the hours of your day, include time to get out and socialize, even if this just means going to buy groceries. Working freelance or working remotely often means you spend a lot of your time alone, and while a lot of creative professionals don't mind this, “alone” can become one short step away from “lonely”.

2) I'm my own boss.

Somehow, the belief exists in many creative professionals that things get easier when you are self-employed. To some extent, that can be true – particularly because there are “less fingers in the pie”. Whatever you’re working on, you direct the course of its creation and completion. Except, the more fingers there are in the pie, the less responsibility you have; instead of just focusing on the creative aspect, you are now responsible for communicating with the client, taking their calls, having meetings, writing up a business plan, writing up contracts, making sure you receive payment, filing the paperwork, handling your marketing, answering e-mails and social media ... and being creative. And of course, when you’re working for a company, you get guaranteed work and usually some form of health insurance or benefits – and the risk of being laid off.

Although you’re running all the shots of your own business, the people giving you business also have a say. To a degree, clients are the ultimate boss – but at least you can “fire” them if you need to. One thing to bear in mind though, is the dreaded difficult client. Working for yourself, you often have several projects on the go instead of focusing solely

on one, but different projects means communicating with different clients. The next thing you know, you have two or three hard-to-work-with customers instead of just one.

Of course, self-discipline, motivation, and organization will prevail over all else – developing a system for handling each client or project is beneficial. Although you might be working at home one day and from a cafe the next, general consistency and routine from project to project is key.

3) I control how much money I make.

This statement must first be preceded with the assumption that you will make money freelancing no matter what. You have no control over that. What you do have control over, however, is how you ensure you are in a position to make a profit. First and foremost – do not up and quit your job to freelance. Unless by “up and quit” you mean “create a game-plan and save up some money first”. Working freelance is different than any other typical office job because a great portion of being successful comes from first testing out the waters and finding out what works best. And the tides do change.

While there isn't a larger corporation taking a cut of the profit made from your work, or no other employees to pay, there are still a number of factors that determine whether or not you "make it". You choose how many clients or projects you work on at any given time, so you do have the option of multiple income streams. But referencing the water-based analogy used earlier, freelancing can come in waves. Sometimes you will have an abundance of work (and therefore wealth), and sometimes you might not. Sometimes clients will take a long time to pay you.

The control that you do have is over how you spend your money. In addition to your savings, devise a monthly budget and a monthly average income that you need to reach to support your budget based on the averages of the lowest months' pay you received last year, or if you're on salary, look at how much a few of the projects your company received were worth. At worst, you can still support yourself, and at best, you will exceed your financial expectations.

Devising a proper estimate is just as important as how you budget your money. The most common mistake that freelancers make is by short-changing themselves in order to seem more appealing to clients, to get more jobs.

However, working for far less than the project is actually worth is detrimental to your bank account. With a proper estimate, a proper contract is key to avoiding scope creep (unpredicted and often unpaid additional tasks that go along with a project). Make sure to outline in your contract the amount of revisions allowed before you can charge extra for work or time that wasn't originally accounted for in the initial estimate. Of course, properly estimating a job only comes with time and experience (and often mistakes). Research what other professionals in your field are charging for their services, then develop strategic pricing from there.

4) I only have to work on things I'm interested in.

Working on only things you're interested in can be widely true, if what you're interested in is fairly broad. For instance, "print ads" versus "print ads for car companies" – very different. That being said, when you are working a field as competitive as the world of freelancing, you can't afford to turn down potential work until you have an established client base. Less work only means less money. If you like designing print ads, you might just have to suck it up and design websites sometimes too.

Another common misconception is the idea of working only when you feel inspired – which we would all like to believe happens more often than it actually does. Being creative, whatever field it may be in, takes just as much practice to be good at as it does to be good at accounting, or selling cars. That being said, it's important to make sure to work even when you are not inspired, which ties back nicely to the first idea of setting a schedule for yourself. A blank page is not nearly as close to an end product as scribbles and mock-ups are, so by waiting for inspiration to strike, you're not only losing out on the important process of creative development, you're also losing out on billable hours.

Freelancing can be a great way for creative professionals to self-manage their skills and their potential, as well as have personal control over their income and time, but it's often highly mythicized. It's no easier or “better” than any other job – at the end of the day, doing a good job at what you do requires just as much hard work and conscious effort in or out of a traditional office.

Check out these helpful sites for getting started as a creative freelance: [FlexJobs](#), [Freelancer](#), [Guru](#), [E-lance](#), [FreelanceFolder](#), [FreelanceSwitch](#), [ModernFreelance](#)



ON A LIMB: IS BRANCHING OUT NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS?

CHAPTER II – *by Sean Minogue*

The rise of short-term contract work and full-time jobs with “kitchen sink” descriptions is making it necessary to think strategically about what you offer as a creative professional. Can a freelance designer who works only in branding and packaging sustain a career in today’s world? Can a copywriter afford to be mystified by Photoshop?

EXPLORE. CREATE. REPEAT. – *by 4ormat.com*

It's a nightmare to be in the middle of an interview and suddenly realize you're missing a make-or-break skill that'll cost you the job. "I'm a quick study," you insist. "I'll get up to speed in the next week or two." But the die is cast – you're under-qualified. All that's left is for you to gather up your portfolio, shake hands like everything went well, and find the closest bar serving whisky.

Although there's no excuse not to evolve professionally, should you attempt to broaden your skill set in order to increase your employability? The days of narrowing a single craft to a fine point are coming to an end, and only the best among us will nab the remaining unhyphenated position titles. It's a matter of economic necessity – both for companies looking to become more efficient, and for individuals looking for sustainable careers.

Video Killed the Radio Star

The truth is that this isn't a new problem; it's an accelerating one. In every industry, there are technological advances displacing specialists. Wordpress, Tumblr, and Blogspot have spurred amateur web design and content creation. Instagram has made photographers of us all. Digital cameras were the

Big Bang equivalent in the independent film industry. And each of these innovations has nudged out, or reduced to a varying degree, the work that would have otherwise gone to dedicated specialists.

It's easier than ever to pick up new skills, and it's never been harder to accept that you don't know enough. It may not be an appetizing prospect to seek out more student debt, but at least an increasing number of institutions are thawing their position on à la carte education. The hard part is in researching the right course or workshop, and finding the time to make it worthwhile.

Another approach to reconnecting with your skill set is to attend networking events, such as [Creative Mornings](#), which exist to foster dialogue about the creative economy. These gatherings are filled with people who have either experienced similar career challenges or know someone who has. Some-times the easiest way to solve a problem or uncover a self-imposed limitation is talking it out with a like-minded stranger.

The Hipsters Are All Right

There's something to be said for the revival of old school craftwork. Identifying yourself as a singular professional in a niche field not only gives you a sense of pride about what you do every day, but it can also create a natural ecosystem of specialists. You don't have to be a 20-something bearded printmaker to appreciate the concept of clearly defined professions and career paths.

The jack-of-all-trades, cost-cutting approach to the creative industry is at odds with the imperative to innovate within our unique disciplines. Meaning: how can we push what's possible if we're spreading ourselves so thin by focusing mostly on doing more than just doing well? A narrow approach to career development might strain your bank account, but it could be the gamble you need to create meaningful work.

Grow – Don't Stray

If you're not content to risk the health of your career, you've got to evolve. One way to start is to establish your own unique central focus, your driving mantra. Are you a designer who writes? Maybe a photographer with video

editing chops? This process should take some time because it involves determining the characteristics of what a successful career looks like to you.

Once you've got your professional raison d'être locked down – which puts you way ahead of most of us – you can begin mapping out some complementary, in-demand skills that can potentially help you achieve your career goals. Knowing what you want doesn't mean you'll get it, but at least you'll know what you're looking for. The rest is up to chance.



CREATIVITY IS THE BEST ROUTINE

CHAPTER III – *by Lydia Pawlowsky*

Inspiration has the tendency to hit us when we least expect it; without a moment's notice, it's ignited and our minds become aflame with ideas. Yet too often, people confuse creativity with inspiration – writing creativity off as a series of one-off's due perhaps just to luck or talent.

EXPLORE. CREATE. REPEAT. – *by 4ormat.com*

In all actuality, creativity is something that needs to be consistently worked on, much the same as developing a skill or strengthening a muscle. The key to optimal results, whether creative or otherwise, is routine. If you work on it regularly, inspiration will hit regularly.

Let Your Routine be Messy (but Productive)

Most creative professionals and freelancers relish the fact that their job provides them with (seemingly) endless flexibility compared to our working definition of what constitutes a “routine”. Whether we acknowledge it or not, what we truly value is the freedom to create and customize our own routines – not give them up entirely. Routine, then, is not about making creative work dull or boring, but simply recognizing that some structure is necessary for success. Routine is supportive, not stifling.

Making sure you spend a set amount of time working per week supports the idea of not quantity over quality, but quantity *becoming* quality. By generating more creative output, routinely, it'll become easier for you to identify and refine those nuggets of gold. Consider, for example, the difference between writing 500 words a day (regardless of the day) and waiting for that one perfect sentence before you even touch

your pen to paper. If you were to go with the latter, how long would it be before you even had anything at all written down? Would you ever? Your first creative step is not a finished product. Creativity is messy, and routine allows you to be messy in a way that's conducive to productivity.

Avoid Interpretation, Hesitation, Frustration

Developing a routine for your creativity is a matter of conditioning yourself to produce consistent creative results. In short, art is your business: professionalize it. Practice always makes perfect, so training yourself to get into a creative mode during specific conditions. For instance, sticking to a certain time schedule, environment, or music choice while working will allow you to format your focus according to that “trigger”. Regardless of what you decide to “control”, your routine has to be unique – something you don't associate with other activities. You have to isolate your routine, and bring it into focus.

This could also mean avoiding doing certain things if they take you out of the right frame of mind – like constantly checking up on your social media or deciding to balance your checkbook in the middle of a project. Devote your

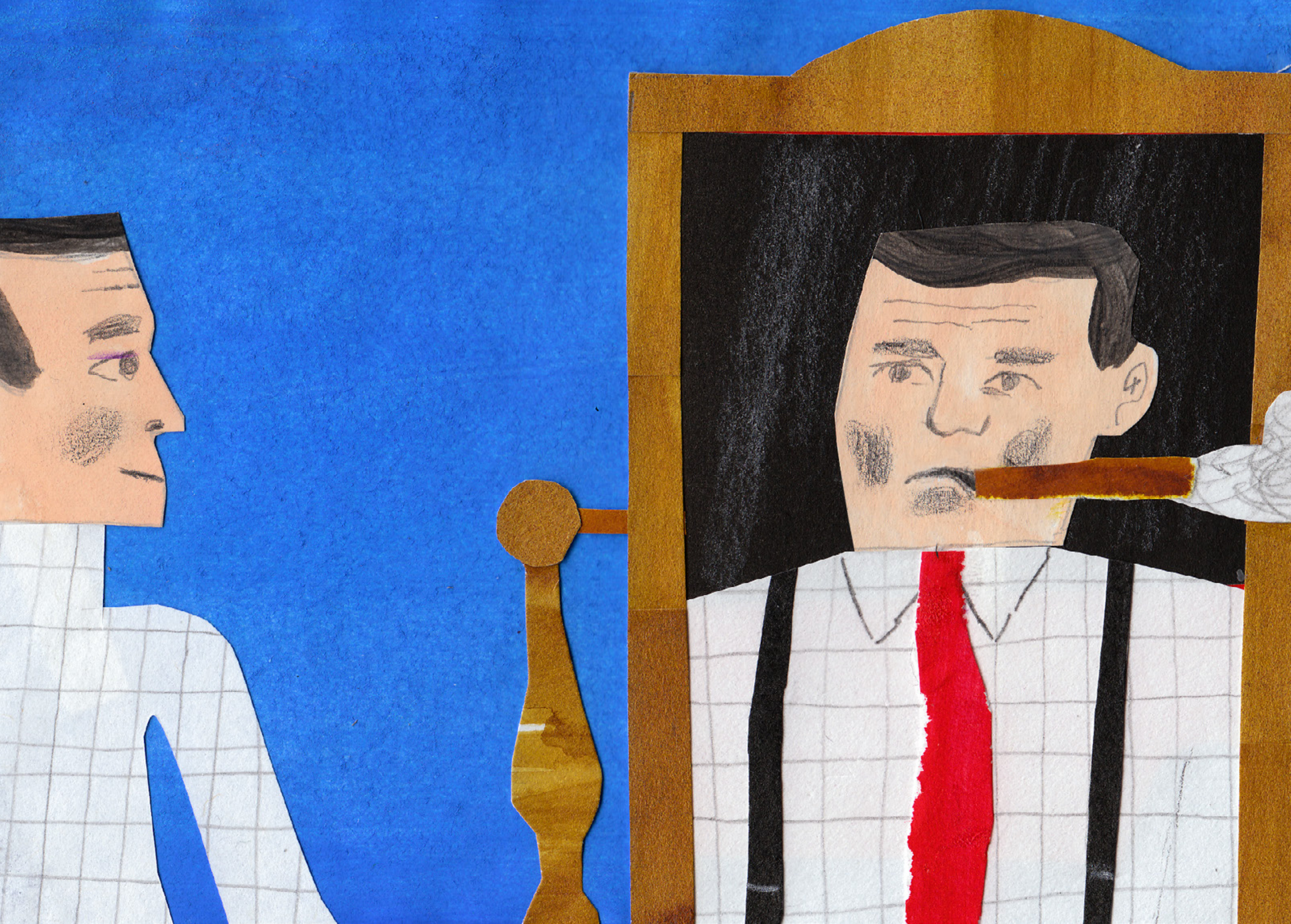
creative time solely to creating, and get in the habit of doing so. Determine what tasks you need to complete in your day (or week) and set time aside for each one. Although we believe that “last minute inspiration” is best, rushing can actually end up killing our creativity. In rushing through things, we aren’t really focused one hundred percent on what we’re doing. And there’s no guarantee that lightning will strike on demand.

By developing a work routine to adhere to, you’re constantly keeping both your technical and well as problem solving skills sharp – like keeping a gear well oiled. Setting limitations and conditions for yourself also provides just the right amount of pressure you need to get things done – working sans routine leaves too much open to interpretation, hesitation, and frustration.

Be Creative – Consistently

Of course, you’ll still have your “spark” moments of inspiration, but routine speaks directly to your productivity. By eliminating the need to spend time making obvious decisions like what to do (and when to do it), you ultimately free up your mind for creative thought. The biggest difference

between a creative hobbyist and a creative professional is consistency. Being creative is your job – it's something that you work at to develop and excel at; it's not something you pick up or walk away from when you so choose. Creativity is a habit that you shouldn't break.



CHANNEL YOUR INNER BOSS

CHAPTER IV – *by Sean Minogue*

Freelancers are their own worst enemies. We all slack off occasionally and then work ourselves to the bone to catch up. We obsess over one project that we love and maybe gloss over another we're struggling through. Sometimes, we get so busy that our work process starts looking like the emergency room triage, which can distract us from our own career goals. We might not have the freedom to act

EXPLORE. CREATE. REPEAT. – *by 4ormat.com*

this way, for better or worse, if we had to answer to someone else.

Being your own boss is one of the most attractive parts of working independently. You reap all benefits of your success, you determine project priorities, and you have the power to decide which clients you will work with. There are no middle-managers patrolling bland, bureaucratic office environments to make sure you're maintaining peak productivity. But once you take away the negative aspects of being constantly supervised, there are actually some great benefits in having to answer to someone else every day.

What Good Bosses Do

We all have stories of working for nightmare bosses, but that doesn't mean good ones aren't out there. It's just harder to notice – and be thankful for – the positive influence they have on our careers. A good boss can be the most powerful ally you have for getting ahead in your field and progressing as a creative. They are never quite satisfied with your work and know how to push you harder. They focus your efforts with day-to-day direction and expect you to achieve certain milestones along the way.

This sense of expectation, that someone is paying close attention to your efforts, is incredibly valuable. It creates an urgency to create, and without it many freelancers fail. Being our own boss means being a responsible captain of our creative energy. The easier you are on yourself, the weaker your performance will be.

As a creative, one of the most frustrating and beneficial aspects of having someone monitor your work is the critical feedback. If you have a boss, he or she is ideally someone who has significant expertise in your discipline and can impart that knowledge by commenting frequently on your work. The more organized and driven freelancers among us have long recognized the value of peer review, and that has spurred the growth of informal professional organizations (such as [Creative Mornings](#)).

Be a Better Boss to Yourself

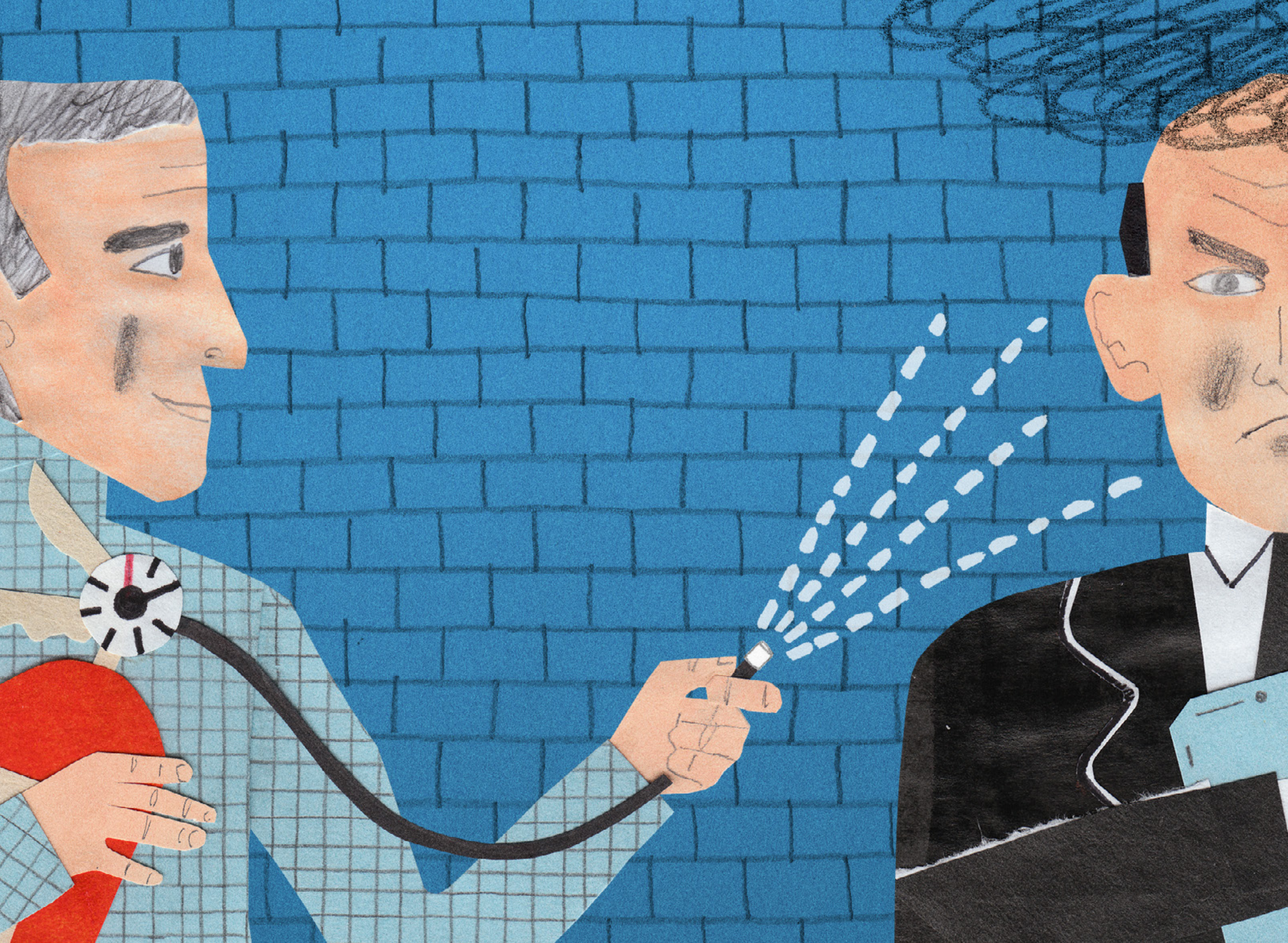
It's tricky to provide yourself with the full positive influence of a good supervisor, but there are some ways you can try – especially if you're struggling with productivity. The goal is to make yourself accountable for your overall career. It might be helpful to think of it like this: you (the person) are

working for You (the professional creative). Now, with that slight division, you can try assessing your own performance. How well are you fulfilling your own expectations? What are some of your bad habits and how should you address them? Are there specific areas where you could improve in your work?

Freelancers who charge an hourly rate are already familiar with recording how much time they spend on a particular task. This kind of thinking is helpful throughout your entire day as well. Online services like Toggl.com offer a more technical tracking system that can help you assess your productivity.

It's a hard pill to swallow when freelancers discover that working independently doesn't actually mean doing away with bosses, but becoming one. If you want to build a sustainable career on your own, you need to consistently act as your own best critic and mentor and cheerleader.

It's the kind of challenge that almost makes you miss your old bosses. Almost.



HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT CLIENTS

CHAPTER V – *by Lydia Pawlowsky*

Taking the plunge into full-time freelancing is a liberating experience. Finally, your career is (mostly) on your own terms, and you now have the power to make of it what you want. Unfortunately, business is a two-sided affair – which can be a particularly frustrating fact when dealing with clients you don't see eye to eye with. ECR has put

EXPLORE. CREATE. REPEAT. – *by 4ormat.com*

together this freelancers' guide to difficult clients to help you out in those less-than-ideal relationships.

Plan Ahead

First and foremost, the best plan of action is a preemptive one; take initial precautions to ensure you won't have a difficult customer, and you probably won't. The most common problems any freelancer has to deal with are clients who take up too much of their time with frequent requests, being underpaid, and unrealistically-set goals or timeframes. Before even starting a job, avoid inevitable hassle by clearly outlining what the job is and what your role in it will be: be very straightforward with your work expectations, and ask the client for their expectations. And then ask them to go over it again, to make sure you're both really on the same page. This should all be included a contract – specify what the work to be done is, your working hours, terms that both parties agree to, details about a down payment and “kill fee” (how much you'll still get paid even if you have to terminate the job for whatever reason after a certain amount of time), assigned due dates or revision dates, and the list goes on. It might be best to look at a [few examples online](#) before you get started. Also be sure to outline smaller

details, such as how many revisions a client is allowed, when you should meet to show draft versions, and clarify what work is considered “outside the scope” (and what kind of retribution you will be rewarded for completing this work). It’s worthwhile to consider tracking the details of a project or job on a collaborative platform, so that both parties have access to the same information. [Basecamp](#) and [Conceptboard](#) are two collaboration apps that help to organize shared ideas/work.

Communicate Clearly

You’ve submitted your first draft/sketch/etc, and now your client is calling you incessantly to work out the details, because “it’s all wrong”. First, resist all urges to get mad. Or, get mad, but don’t do so at the expense of the client – maybe step away from your computer and don’t email them for an hour until you can compose yourself. When that’s done, ask for further clarification. This may require you to prompt them with very specific questions – do you not like the colour, is the type not what you want, and so on and so forth. If time is of the essence, it may be helpful to ask your client to show you examples of what (in particular) they are looking for, or something that is similar to the idea they

have in mind – anything to cut down the amount of time spent misunderstanding one another. The mistake that most creative professionals make is in asking an open ended question: “what don’t you like about it?” – to which people often reply with an open ended statement: “I don’t know”. That is not productive. Proper communication is absolutely key, so make sure to stay (sounding) positive despite how frustrated you may actually be in reality. If you think there might be a gap due to poor communicating, try reiterating your issues differently. If you think there might be a gap due to lack of knowledge or understanding, try briefly explaining to them your reasons for X (without being a jerk). It’s important to get feedback before you get too far into anything, which is why you set up those check dates in your contract. When all of these snags have been smoothed out, the next step is to fix whatever they need fixed. After all, it is your job.

Reevaluate

There is still a chance that even after putting on your best customer service hat, the client will still prove to be difficult – and the ways are endless. With that being said, it’s time to do an audit of your time and efforts. Look at who or what you’ve been making the most money from, and what you’re

spending the most time on. If your unreasonable client is making you the most money, then it may be in your best interest to stick it out, provided that working with them doesn't become unbearable or soul-sucking. If they're just wasting most of your time, then from a financial standpoint you may wish to consider cutting them loose.

There are also other valid reasons for letting go of a client. For instance, if there's a seriously late or missing payment, if you face harassment, if they request you to do something illegal or immoral, or frequent contract breaches (like not respecting when your working hours are, or failure to meet certain obligations).

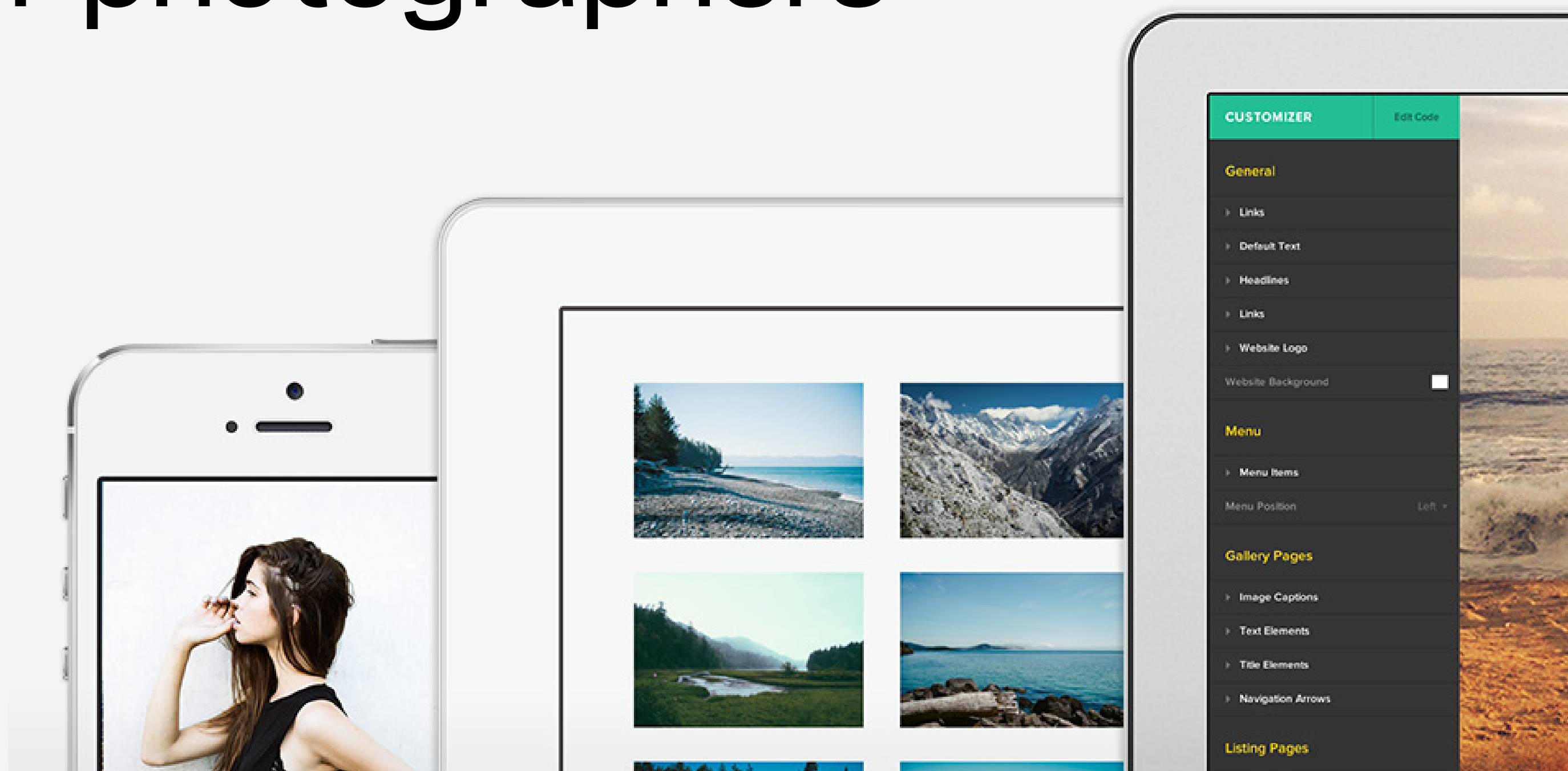
Remember, a bad client is ultimately more than just that – it's a bad situation, and one you need to either remedy or get yourself out of, if the losses outweigh the gains. If you do have to “fire” a client, remain as neutral as possible, so as to not make the situation any worse than it already is. Simply tell them that you don't think your services are meeting their needs any longer. In your contract, it would be beneficial to include details about the possibility of this situation – what work you will give them, what they will have to pay you, etc. Firing a client is not the worst thing in

the world. If you weren't complying to contractual agreements or were unable to meet their standards, you would most likely get fired yourself; there is no reason a client should hold an unfair amount of "power" over you. Anything that keeps you from fully being a professional is bad for business.



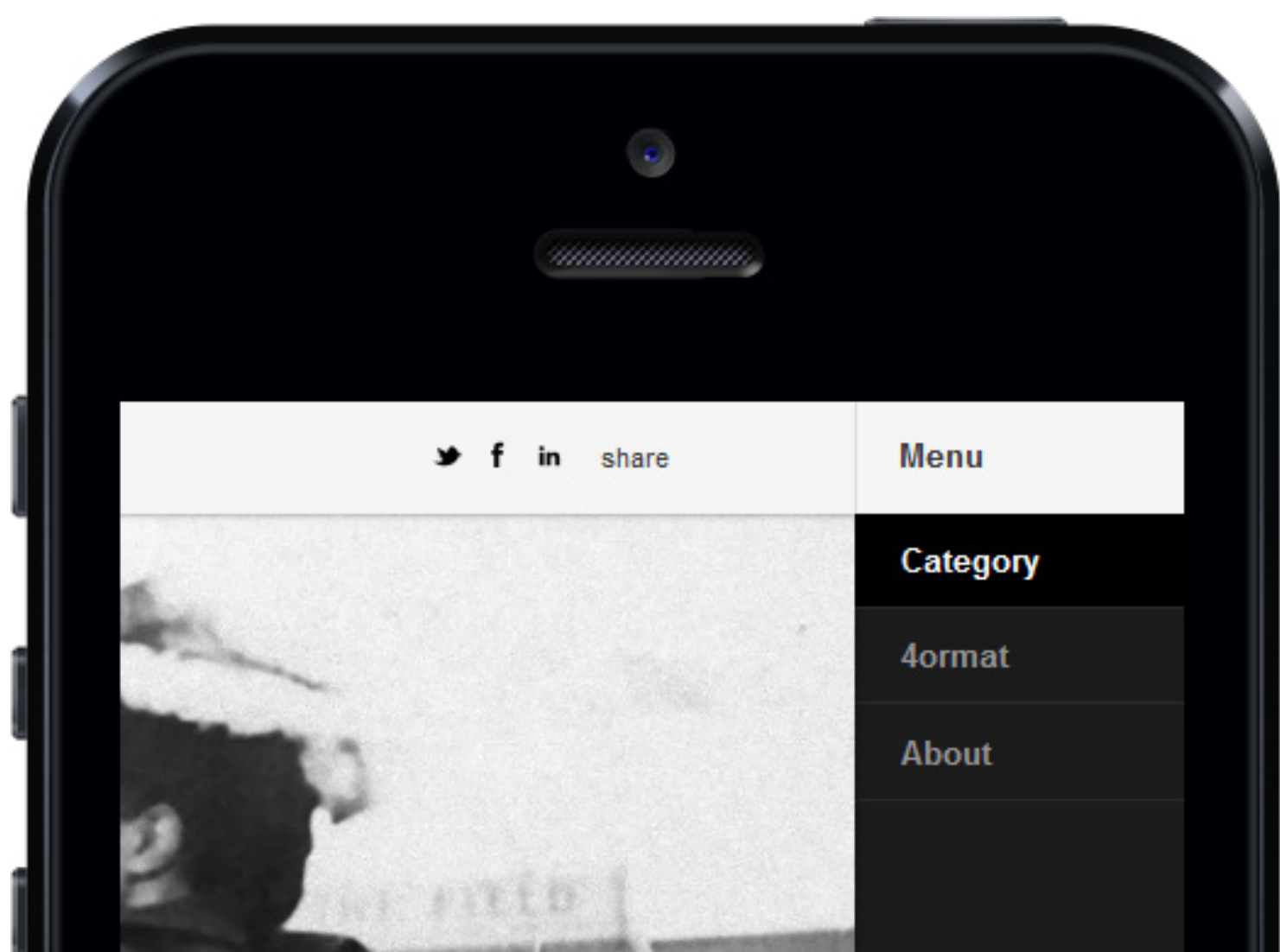
Stunning & incredibly customizable portfolios for photographers

Try Now



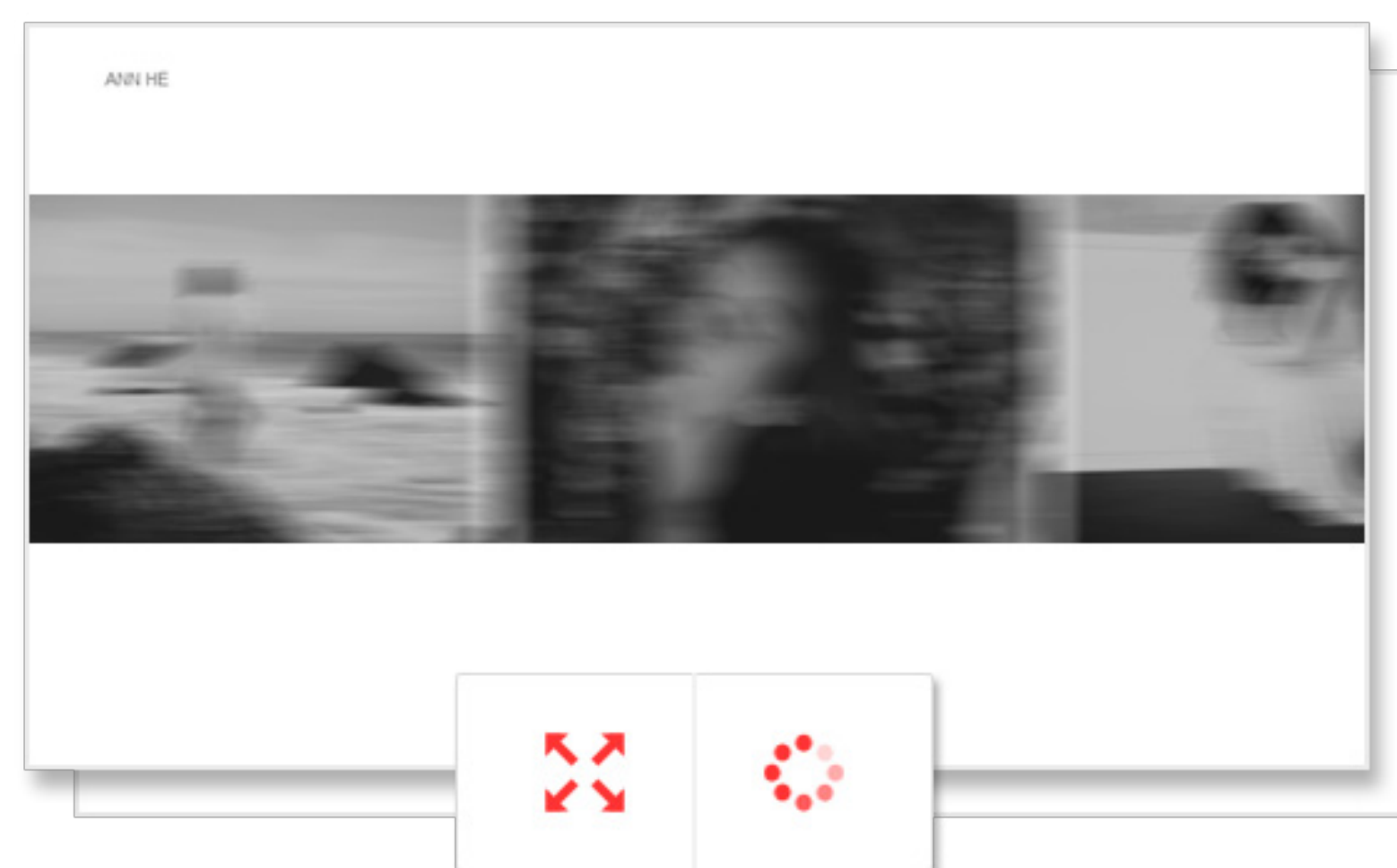
Simply Professional.

Your portfolio is quick & easy to create – and mobile/tablet ready.



Dynamic themes.

Choose from over 24 professionally-designed modern themes.



Fully customizable.

Use our drag and drop theme editor to design your portfolio the way you want.

