



the content **byte**

Show Notes

Season 3, Episode 11:
6 things to do when you
start freelancing

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What's in this episode?

Hosts Rachel Smith from [Rachel's List](#) and journalist and content creator [Lynne Testoni](#) talk about what you need to do when you start a freelance business

1. Do the admin stuff first.

- Get an ABN – it's easy and you'll need it to send invoices.
- Set up your socials, make them consistent and professional. Put keywords in your bio – like 'content writer and journalist' so it's immediately clear what you do.
- Consider reserving a domain that you can use for your website and email address. It looks far more professional than just using the URL wordpress gives you. If you find the domain you want, buy it on a site like GoDaddy rather than Melbourne IT. You'll get it for about \$30 for 2 years rather than spending hundreds. Little insider tip!
- If you suspect you'll need insurance (and you might need it immediately if you start doing content marketing for any big corporates or government agencies), Freelance Pro's insurance via the MEAA is the best value.
- Get your finances set up. Rach loves Rounded, while Lynne uses Quickbooks. If you can't afford an accounting package just yet, an Excel spreadsheet or Google spreadsheet will do the trick. Or check out the [income tracker](#) in the Toolkit at Rachel's List. (Hot tip: Charge GST from the start; it makes you look more professional.)

2. Get a website

It doesn't have to be fancy – or perfect, but you definitely need one. Lynne uses Wix, which can be up and running in a day, or less. Pretty basic, but easy, especially if you have lots of nice images on hand. That or Squarespace is ideal if you just want something simple to host your portfolio.

Rachel is a big fan of Wordpress, which has lots of add-ons and is quite versatile. It's a step up from Wix and Squarespace, but good if you have big plans. We both prefer to create our own sites, so we can make our own updates and changes as we go – and times change.

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Alternatively, you can get a graphic designer colleague or friend to do one for you, but it will cost – which might be hard at the beginning of your freelance career.

For a range of ideas on building an online portfolio, read [this blog post](#).

3. Contact everyone. And we mean everyone.

That means former editors, family members, friends, friends of friends. Send emails announcing that you're hanging out your shingle and are available for XYZ. Let them know you're available now. Put a message on LinkedIn saying you've had an opening in your schedule and you're ready to take on new projects.

If you've been made redundant, as your editor if there's any way they can give you regular work as a freelancer. Or if he/she knows of any editors who might have a freelancing budget and can fling you some work. This can be the single most important thing you do before leaving the 'stable', so to speak, and can be a springboard to a lot of regular freelance work coming your way.

4. Connect with your tribe.

Whether it's attending the regular [MEAA](#) drinks, finding a group of like-minded creatives on MeetUp or simply organising regular pow-wows with other freelancers you know, this alone can be an antidote to the isolation you can feel freelancing.

You should also join a heap of Facebook groups to tap into the amazing communities on there – from writing groups to freelance collectives, jobs boards and hidden industry groups.

Our favourites?

- Rachel's List Gold Group (for Gold members of Rachel's List)
- Freelance Jungle
- Georgia's Media Circle
- The Freelance Content Marketing Writer (Jennifer Goforth Gregory)
- Find-A-Finder's Fee
- Young Australian Writers (under 40yos)
- Australian Community Managers

Each of these groups can answer a lot of those awkward questions. Hot tip: Use the search button on Facebook to see what's already been discussed before you ask all your questions.

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5. Establish a structure to your day.

When you don't have to get dressed and get to an office by 9am, it can be easy for the day to drift. So it's good to start as you mean to go on, with a structure for work hours, exercise, breaks, admin (including social media) and possibly pitching / contacting new clients. Establish a to-do list either online or just on a piece of paper sticky-taped to the wall where you can see it to keep you accountable.

- You definitely want to reserve time in your day or week for lead generation. This means researching companies you might want to write for and contacting them with a letter of introduction.
- Some freelancers swear by a premium LinkedIn membership – and there's a way for journalists to get a year free. [Click here for details](#).
- Researching magazines to pitch to can be part of your lead gen. We've done an [episode on pitching](#) and it's really important to monitor your pitches and your lead generation. Create a system for all of it so you don't drop the ball. Our [pitch tracker](#) Excel tool in the Toolkit is super popular for this.

6. Be realistic about how freelancing works.

There's a pervading belief that freelancing is easy, but it can be isolating and hard to get into the groove. Also not everyone is cut out for the endless hustle, and the fact that you're not just writing, you're running your own business. Wearing all the hats (marketing, admin, social, hustling etc takes a lot of time).

Set yourself a goal of 2-3 months to start making money and use that time to get established, to get all your systems in place, to be pitching every week and reaching out to companies, to connecting with other freelancers and being visible online.

Also, take note of the skills you might need beyond just writing. I was interviewed about this for [Journo's Get Online](#) and there's a skills list you can download at the end of the article.

That's it for this episode. Hope you've found these show notes useful.

Cheers, Rachel and Lynne