

“The Flexibility in Freelancing”



“Money won’t create success, the freedom to make it will.”

Nelson Mandela

“How Does One Become a Freelance Interpreter?” is a loaded question. In order to become a Freelance Interpreter, clearly one must have completed some sort of formal training and taken one of several tests required by each individual state to become an Interpreter. There are a few tests and/or evaluation diagnostic tools out there such as a state Quality Assurance (QA) test or the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) exam or the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) exam and in some cases State Licenses in addition. Becoming a Freelance Interpreter clearly is a personal choice. After a dedicated study and successful passing of one of the tests for the profession, and countless workshops, (not to mention “baptism by fire” in the “community”) one arrives to what fits their lifestyle at the time. We have all heard it said, “Necessity is the Mother of Invention”. I am a firm believer that all of our needs are met when we are in the right place at the right time and when we are open and honest to identifying and prioritizing our most pressing needs. The process is not easy and requires work and attention. A person will know when and if the time is right to become a Freelancer.

A freelancer can make an honest living if assignments are available in their area. Freelancers obtain assignments primarily via agencies that fulfill a need with a particular discipline, such as medical, legal, educational or a specific community. These agencies can be local or national. In the current world, it is possible to provide services for an agency and never set foot inside of the brick and mortar location. Assignments and deals are sealed via an electronic handshake. Often these assignments are parlayed into additional opportunities for Freelancers, especially when professionalism is the top priority... trust automatically ensues.

There are a variety of benefits associated with being a freelancer. Freelancers enjoy the benefits of independence and flexibility as well as the unending expanse of variety. The freelancer builds an expansive repertoire of experiences with a caveat of vocabulary which is invaluable and can never be seized by anyone. This sort of intellectual property is something that all interpreters should seek to increase marketability.

The pros and cons are equally balanced when working with an agency. I tend to take the optimistic path. Advantages and Disadvantages are in the hands of the beholder and the beholder’s personal perspective on what is important. One of the pros is all of the pre-conference information and negotiations are supplied and set for you. One of the cons is the freelancer receives a percentage of

the gross profits and must master the discipline of personal accounting for income tax purposes as well as paying for your own insurances. These are only a few to consider when thinking of becoming a freelancer.

Freelancers can also take full advantage of maintaining and managing quality time with their respective loved ones as well as making time for recreational activities. After all, freelancing is a business and should be treated as such.

Freelancers become successful and crafty at managing their respective budgets during the lean times. The key is cultivating and maintaining successful relationships. For example, smart long-term freelance K-12 educational interpreters learn to take advantage of the summer months with such things as tutoring, theme park interpreting, teaching ASL at summer camps (if qualified), and the like.

In summary, freelancers have the ability of creating their own way and carving their own niche in the marketplace. Ultimately, you become your own brand and have the luxury of creating a demand for your services by remaining open and teachable while keeping your hands clean...(pun intended).



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