



GETTING MORE FROM YOUR SITE

Transforming your web presence so it delivers leads for
your freelance work (without resorting to rocket science)

by Liam Veitch

AUTHOR, "STOP THINKING LIKE A FREELANCER"



About the author

I've grown my freelance business into something I am truly proud of, yet I know the feeling of battling as a freelancer all-too-well. Following an initial failure I tried again with a renewed mindset and I teach everything I know at freelancelift.com.

It took me one failure at the freelance game and a 2 year sentence as a zombie-herd employee at a corporate to figure it out, now I want to give you the benefit of my experience as well as inviting you into the world of the people who have been there and broken the freelance boundaries themselves.

If your website isn't contributing to your business goals it's working against you rather than for you. You might be 'doing okay' from referrals or repeat business but what if you could have a website which delivered you leads as well? What might that do to the stability of your freelance gig?

When your website is the only constant connection a prospective client has, you need to know that it'll tell your story, engage and inspire your dream client to start a working relationship.

For the most part though we focus on the wrong areas, blue vs yellow, this image vs that image. Such debates, while satisfying are often not the defining factors when it comes to encouraging a prospect to get a little closer to **buying your services**.

So while these surface factors steal our attention - when we look at why our sites don't convert - it's the real underlying killers that go undetected.

You're stifling your website's ability to work in your favour and as a result your web presence is less tool, more liability.

This book serves to give you (in a concise format) the keys to **changing that status quo**. It isn't complicated and there is no black magic here, just honest advice - in an order you can take action on - for building a website that works in your favour, delivers leads and helps to enhance your freelance business.

It isn't just design either. While logos, layouts and colours do matter there is one guiding principle you need to follow and that's it, but we'll get to that. The real meat will be in building a message and a user journey which makes it a no brainer for a dream client to reach out to you.



PURPOSE

What is the **purpose** of a website?

The first mistake I see is freelancers **putting themselves** at the center of their website. Sure, you need to showcase your work and sure, you'll need to add some personality but consider this truism:

A WEBSITE SHOULD NOT BE A SHRINE TO YOU, IT'S A SHRINE TO YOUR PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS.

Think about that, if your website is all '**me me me**' where does that leave room for the client ?

Although a prospective client would never explicitly put it like that, they show their disapproval for your web presence in ways you already know too well... staying absolutely silent.

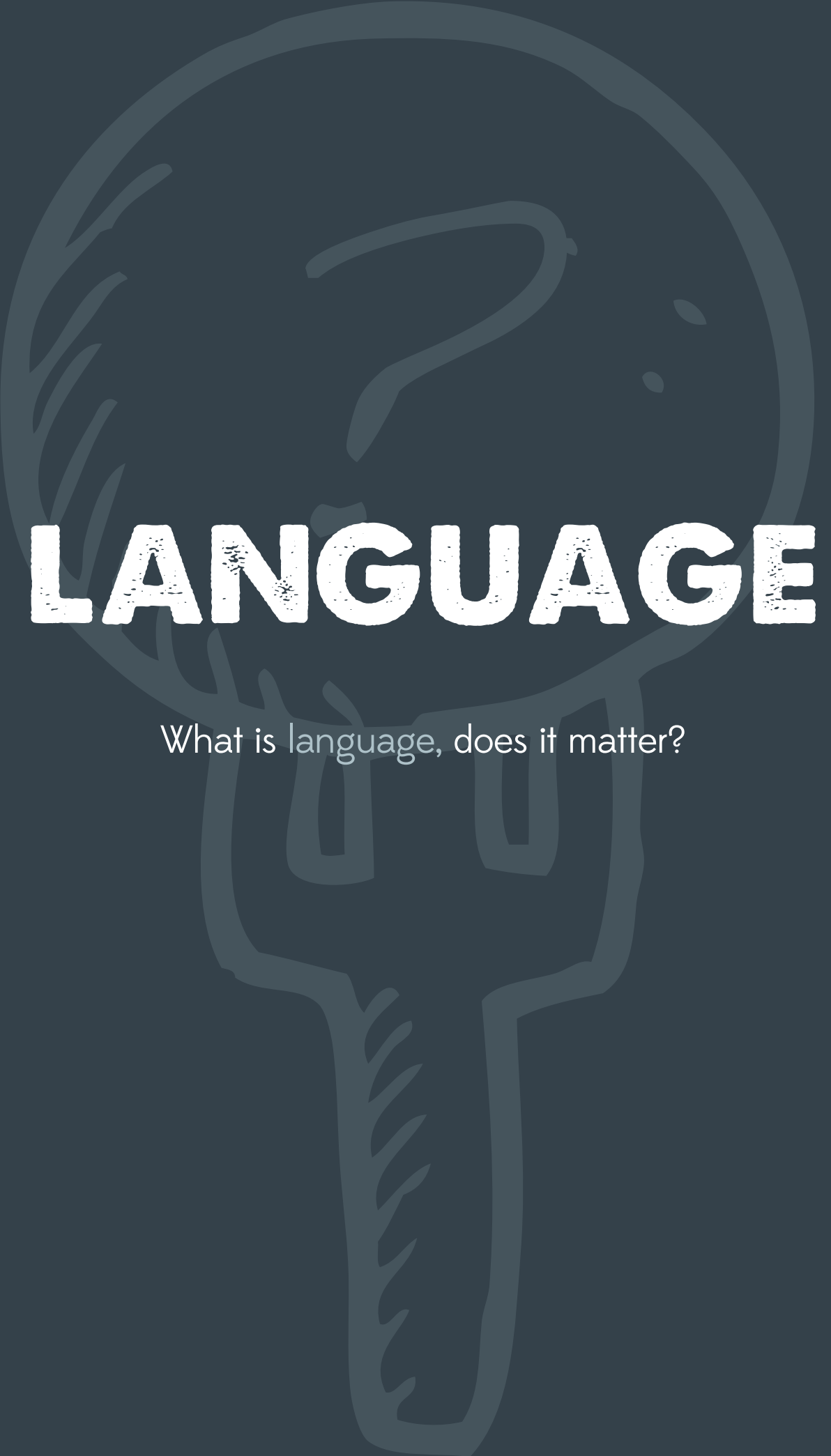
If your website does not speak the language of your client, does not inspire desire for your service and does not make them see you as the solution to their business problem they will walk on by.

They came, they went. You missed the opportunity to talk to them and you never even felt it happen.

The purpose of your website then is to **be there when you can't**, to convince your client that you understand their situation and show clearly that you can turn it around along with giving them a reason to make contact.

When you put it like that, **what the hell difference does a button color make?**

That's the mindset I want you to get into and that's why I wrote this book.



LANGUAGE

What is language, does it matter?

In 2010 I visited Moscow, Russia. It really is a fascinating place, just walking around the Kremlin feels electric, like James Bond could leap into view at any point

A short 3 minute walk from the dominating red brick walls of The Kremlin and colourful domes of the Cathedral was the restaurant we would eat in that night, our hosts Igor and Vladimir along with my wife (then girlfriend) Michelle and I.

What ensued was one of the most interesting and truly different meals I had ever tasted. I lost count of the number of courses after the sixth with each plate more unique than the last.

Attentive waiters stood by our table and decanted carafes of Russian Standard vodka (yes, really) into shot glasses at pre-rehearsed intervals while beckoning us to follow it down with fruit juice.

It was a feast I will struggle to forget, something fresh, new and exciting.

Spellbound by the meal and service we experienced Michelle and I decided to return the next day for a second attempt.

We soon realised that this was not a place regularly visited by tourists. After eventually negotiating our arrival with a series of hand gestures we were seated. The first struggle was our drinks order, barely able to order a universal Cola. It would only get worse from there.

The Cyrillic alphabet is scary, the menu was unreadable and no staff member could help with even broken English.

In the end we just had to point, a poke at the unknown.

We pointed wrong.

Michelle ended up with a lukewarm bowl of what resembled dishwater with two sorry looking dumplings. I had a potato... I think.

We quickly realised this wasn't going to be a repeat of the previous nights treat. We were out of our depth. Without language we were lost.

The food in the kitchen was the same, the staff were the same, we (the customers) were the same yet we felt lost and had a drastically different experience, spending probably 10% the amount we did the previous night.

Igor and Vladimir had explained the dishes to us in such a way that it **made sense to our worldview** and handled the scary stuff without our needing to.

This is the job of your website. Not to shout about how good you and Vladimir are, but to **make sense of the world** for your dream client, to connect the dots on their behalf and **make them desire your service**.

If you are being unnecessarily technical, self-serving or unclear you will lose the opportunity to make the sale.

You're using a language your prospective client doesn't speak.
Like the fantastic food and service at the restaurant, your product doesn't change - it's just you isolate your would-be client with poor communication, a sketchy website or poor copy.

We made a hasty exit from the restaurant, don't let your prospective clients do the same from your website.

Put simply, words matter.



WORDS

Words matter

We often find it easy to explain the value of what we're offering verbally, in person without wandering into the realm of buzzwords, meaningless statements and overly technical jargon.

We speak to the skill level and worldview of the person in front of us, tone down our language so that it can be easily understood and do our level best to ensure they key points are covered.

So why is it then that we suddenly lose this capacity when we're telling that story remotely? Why does our website copy complicate, mystify or fail to connect?

"The thing is, in school we're taught that writing is hard, but it isn't. You just need to write like you talk,"

"So rather than sitting down trying to write for a built-up, abstract idea of an ideal prospect, imagine it's a person and you're sitting across from them, just talking. Call them 'Sam', to make it personal."



Copyriting expert D Bnonn Tennant on [Freelancelift Q&A](#)

Your job is to put together copy that speaks the language of your prospective client, builds a relationship and generates the trust required to **make contacting you inevitable.**

Solving problems vs buying services

When landing at your door for help, what is your would-be client trying to achieve?

Ultimately, visitors will come to your site hoping to solve a business problem they have. Your skills – they expect – are the vehicle for getting from their current situation to where they want to be. But it isn't the skills themselves they really care about.

By focusing your site copy and accompanying messaging on **your skills rather than their pain** you'll only succeed in alienating your visitor.

In my book 'Stop Thinking Like a Freelancer' there is a whole section dedicated to this one point alone; really understanding the worldview of your prospective client and positioning your content accordingly.

Really, the only way to explain your freelance service to a prospective customer is with words. As browsing habits have evolved your dream client has developed fairly strident defenses against spam, BS and snake oil salesmen.

This makes it more important than ever to humanize your prospective client, to make a connection and show that you understand their problem.

“Just talk to me like a human being”



Rob Williams (of letsworkshop.com) on [Freelancelift Q&A](#)



design

It matters too, kind of.

I'm a designer by trade; it's my job to move pixels into aesthetically pleasing locations. I hire other pixel pushers at the agency and I review designs on an almost daily basis.

So I'm suitably qualified to make the somewhat strange assertion that **design itself isn't everything.**

Design isn't defined by a logo, colour palette or choice of fonts. Good design inspires a feeling and ensures your prospective client feels connected to you and your message.

Your site should enable and encourage otherwise passive visitors to convert into something of value to you. Specifically this means ensuring they have the smoothest path to conversion (whether that's sending you an email, completing a form or opting in to a content piece).

So when this is the goal, design isn't the defining factor.

So does it matter?

The answer is, it depends.

The one thing that's vital to abide by is **design best practice**. Later on we'll talk specifics of what actually constitutes design best practice, but the way your site is structured should support the user in making key judgements:

- › What should I **think** about this page?
- › What should I **feel** about this page?
- › What should I **do** on this page?

Every page on your site should have a logical next step; whether that's getting more information on a particular area of what you do or downloading a piece of takeaway content.

The purpose of your site's design is to make this as easy as possible, nothing more, nothing less. If that means making a black page white, or a yellow button green then so be it, but it's crucial to understand that these decisions should be taken with the user in mind, rather than working to your own taste.

Each page should have a purpose, to advance the likelihood of conversion and design only contributes part of that, **so design does matter, but only in the context of design best practice and only in a way that supports an optimal user journey.**

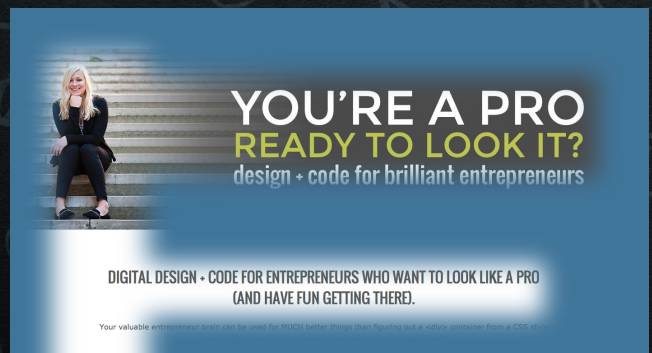
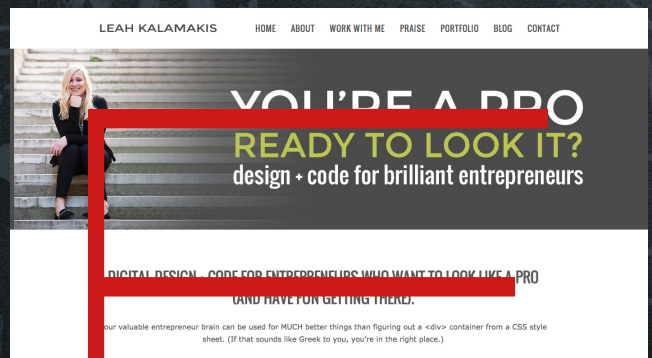
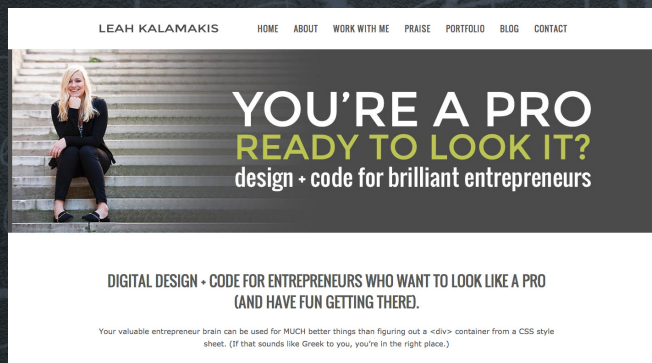
science interlude

Eyetracking research by Nielson Norman Group has revealed an intriguing pattern. Users scan a page in an 'F Pattern' - this makes it vital to place your most impactful information in this area. Here are some of the highest paid freelancers on the web, they have clearly understood, and benefit from this phenomenon. How does your site perform against F pattern movements?

Site: leahkalamakis.com

As you can see when the F pattern develops, Leah's messaging is prominent, crystal clear and in precisely the right place.

You should have your most impactful words or visuals in these areas.



Paul Jarvis

Site: pjrvs.com

Paul's simplistic, to-the-point style really works for visitors scanning in an F pattern.

It's fairly easy for prospective clients with the 'creative entrepreneur' bracket (Paul's market) to identify with the site and copy.

[BOOKS & COURSES](#) / [ABOUT](#) / [ARTICLES](#) / [DESIGN](#) / [NEWSLETTER](#)



I'm Paul Jarvis. I create simple, meaningful things - like best-selling books, courses & websites for creative people like you.

I'm currently booked solid for web design projects and consulting until well into 2015 and not taking new clients. I am however running an online class for freelancers called [The Creative Class](#) right now, so check it out if that tickles your fancy.

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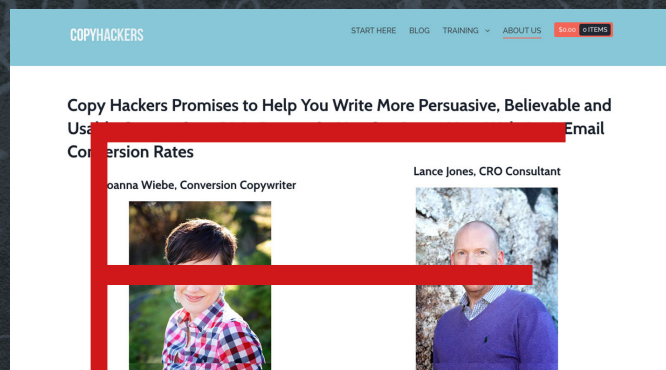
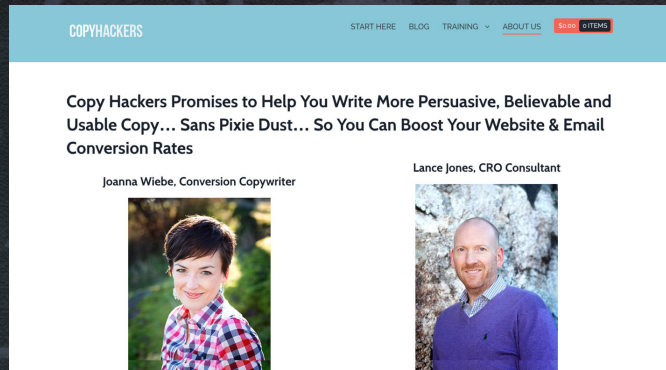
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Site: copyhackers.com

Joanna (and recent team member Lance) regularly bill upwards of \$400 per hour for their time. Their site is an example of what simple copy can bring to a site.



Copy Hackers Promises to Help You Write More Persuasive, Believable and Usable Copy... Sans Pixie Dust... So You Can Boost Your Website & Email Conversion Rates

Joanna Wiebe, Conversion Copywriter



Lance Jones, CRO Consultant



So how do you know what they're looking for? How do you get to know your audience deeply enough to be clear on how your copy and design should play out?

Techniques for knowing your audience deeply

There are tools and techniques which make it infinitely easier to really tune in to the frequency of your prospective client. You'll make the likelihood of contact much greater if you understand some key principles:

- › What do they think they need?
- › What else are they trying?
- › What is their general perception of businesses like yours?

There are some fairly quick ways to find information like this, in particular channels such as:

Reddit

You'll find a subreddit on almost any topic, so whether your audience is as obscure as 'lego traders' or something more conventional like 'self-publishing authors' you'll find lots of conversations occurring which you're able to eavesdrop on.

In doing so, you can begin to learn what general pains occur in your chosen industry and begin to build a picture of daily life in this space.

Amazon

There are over 12,000,000 books on Amazon. In all shapes and sizes addressing all pains. Are there books which claim to remedy the pains you feel your audience might be experiencing?

If so, you'll find a goldmine of dialogue within the reviews area, what the author missed, what they did well, what the reader was really looking for but didn't quite get.

All of this gives you ammunition for your own site content

LinkedIn & Facebook groups

Even though I've combined these two headings, you'll find quite different audiences on each. LinkedIn is more appropriate if your audience generally aligns themselves with the world of business. If your client sector is more business-to-consumer or hobbyists then Facebook might be a better fit.

With both channels the concept is the same. Check out the discussions being had in these groups and see if the pain being felt can be remedied by your service. Look for recurring themes and 'me too' style threads.

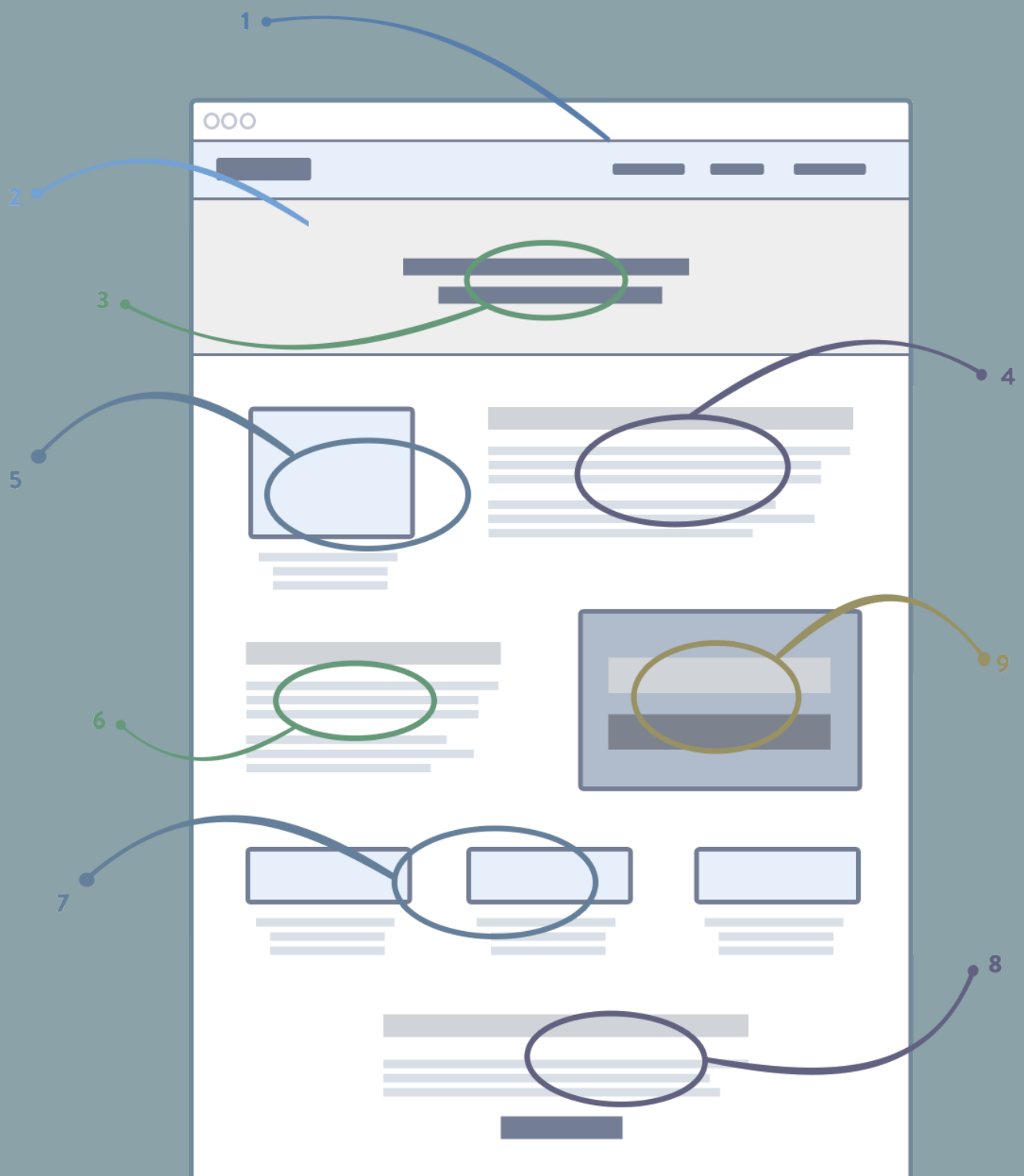
Quora

Q&A platforms like Quora (and for a more tech/web sector [Clarity Answers](#)) offer a unique opportunity to see real-time pains being aired. In most cases you'll hear differing points of view as to the remedies too.

In all cases the goal is simple. Observe your would-be clients in their natural habitat and get a sense of the pains being experienced, the remedies already being tried and their ultimate goals.

GETTING IT DONE

10 key elements of a successful freelancer website



1. Fits the worldview of your dream client

As a skilled professional, it's way too easy to get technical. As a writer you're probably comfortable distinguishing onomatopoeia from hyperbole but is your client?

As an online marketer, does your client know their Panda algorithm update from their Penguin? Or as a designer, does your client really care that you're great at SASS and jQuery?

In almost all these cases, the answer is a resounding NO.

Sure, in some cases technical lingo is called for, but you should consider this a 'tick in the box' exercise closer to the sale.

Your website isn't the place to get entrenched in technical talk - especially in prominent areas such as your homepage - unless the worldview of your client demands it.

So, armed with a vision of a specialist market sector and a profile for who specifically will be visiting your site, your job is to lay out content which matches:

- › Their skill level
- › Their opinion of the things they've already tried
- › Their underlying goals
- › What other sites they frequent

By cross-referencing every paragraph of your content (and site design) with your client's worldview of these objectives you are starting to enter the mindset of your client. This should hopefully make you see why vague headlines and obscure images end up ineffective.

2. Follow design best practice

I mentioned earlier in the book that design does matter, but only kind of. There is a real trend towards simplistic web design (which has no real design vehicles only a sea of white with crisp fonts), which makes great design accessible.

The elements normally classed as ‘design’ - logo, graphics, sliding images, engaging color palettes - can be used sparingly or not at all.

When we talk about design practice here is what we mean:

- › Legible, interesting font with enough line height to allow the copy to breathe
- › Effective use of contrast for call-out elements
- › Generally white or light in appearance
- › Good use of spacing
- › Functions well in mobile
- › Don't be afraid to scroll - ‘the fold’ isn't really a thing any more
- › Only uses imagery and graphics to help a user make sense of content

There is no need to reinvent the wheel though, you'll get design best practice right out of the box on DIY platforms such as:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| › Squarespace | › Virb | › Webs |
| › Dunked | › Weebly | › Yola |

Or you'll find an abundance of high quality WordPress themes on [Themeforest](#) and [ThemesKingdom](#).

3. Leverage effective headlines

You'll note the plural there, you should have more than one heading dotted throughout your content, but your primary headline should take the key elements of the difference statement we developed in the book 'Define Your Dream Client' and restructure it as a strong statement carrying these characteristics:

- › 90 words or under
- › An implied promise for what you'll do or why your different
- › An element of intrigue
- › Should spark an intention to read on

A pro tip is to have the your headlines center aligned (assuming the rest of the page is left aligned) as this disrupts the eyeline and draws more attention to the heading itself

From there you can use subheadings to break up content. These should generally reverse the pains your client is facing.

This book isn't about copywriting and there are lots of resources on structuring a headline effectively outside of this guide, but you'll get enough information in this book to use headlines effectively enough to make a client pay attention, which is its ultimate purpose.

4. Tell your dream client why they're in this situation

It's funny; we get wrapped up too often in telling the client **our** story, showcasing **our** history or exhibiting **our** experience that we forget to address the story, history or experience of the client.

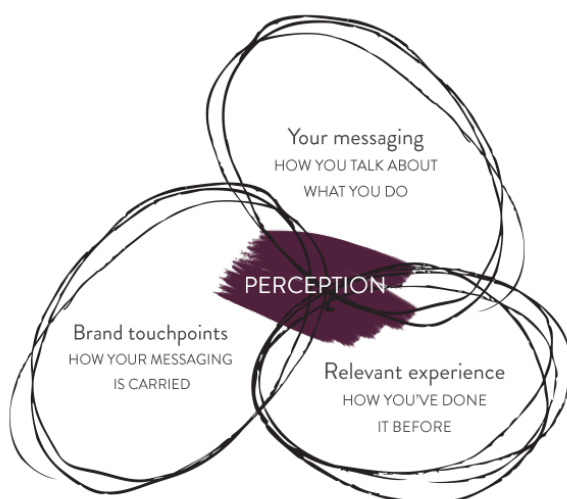
That **'me me me' attitude** only serves to put a wedge between you and the person at the other side of the screen.

As I mentioned earlier, your site should be a shrine to your client, not to yourself.

So explain why they are in this situation, walk them through (from your perspective) the pains that brought them to your door and make your service the clear solution to those pains.

5. Show them your passion and experience

There is a cross section of factors a client will assess - knowingly or not - before making a buying decision. The diagram below comes from the book 'Stop Thinking Like a Freelancer'. These are the elements, which make up a client's perception of you.



So one of the jobs of your site is to clearly show how you've done it before.

How have you helped others like them to achieve the goals they're looking for?

There is a 'good' way and a 'normal' way of showcasing your experience, one shouts loudly in way that demonstrates passion. The other is expected.

Normal way

The normal way is a short snippet, a screenshot if you're a designer or a short testimonial. This way should be considered a minimum.

Good way

The good way, which engages a client and shows them that you have passion and really care, is to lay out a story for your key projects which really digs into how you made the difference. Boutique web design agency Teehan & Lax (recently acquired by Facebook) pioneered this route and you can see a great example of an effective 'project story' [here](#).

This is definitely an 'icing' factor but consider how you might put together a story for three or four key projects, covering:

- › What situation were they in?
- › What did they think they needed?
- › What did they really need?
- › What was your plan?
- › What obstacles did you face?
- › What was the end result?
- › What did the client say?

6. Explain the solution clearly

Once you've established that you understand the client's needs specifically, and that you have experience working with clients like them along with a passion displayed in the way you break down prior projects it's now time to explain your solution.

This could exist on a 'what I do' page and should go into a little more detail on how your service solves the pains the visitor might be facing.

Most freelancers will dive into this immediately, prior to demonstrating an understanding of the client worldview. Like trying to explain complex bike stunts before the stabilizers come off, your client needs to be led to this point gradually.

7. Maximise the value for the visitor

By choreographing and shaping the experience of a visitor on your site you'll have ensured that they stay around longer than usual.

So you can begin to crank up the value of their visit by directing them to content that actually gives them some results in advance.

Whether it's a series of blog posts providing a little more detail on the pains you're looking to remedy, or a video interview of someone like them.

Whatever you decide, it should bring a new dimension to the visit of the client and leave them better informed than before their visit.

Even if they don't reach out to you and contact the first time around, this value will be remembered and they will return.

8. Point to a victory

Your copy and framing should point to the 'victory'. How will life be different for your prospect once you've been able help them on their way?

This beneficial outcome, or 'victory' should be scattered throughout your copy but shall fall in or around call to action areas.

By now you should have a clear understanding of what your dream client wants, so make sure that you paint a picture of **what victory looks like**. By doing so throughout your copy, you'll continually be able to persuade and edge your prospect along.

9. Have a clear, non-sales no brainer call to action

You've probably seen it a thousand times before. A subtle link with one seven letter word 'Contact'.

It's become some common you could almost be forgiven for assuming this was the only way to indicate a route to getting in touch with you.

Something else you've probably seen before, a cursor blinking on a blank 10-field web form. This is known in the web industry as a 'high friction' call to action.

You're asking someone to do something that doesn't come easy, natural or quickly.

There is another way. You're probably reading this because at some stage you felt it was okay to give me your email address. You either might have downloaded an ebook some time ago, watched a video or took a mini course.

This was low friction. You give me your email, I give you a really helpful piece of content. What I was able to do thereafter though was build up enough trust and empathy to build a more meaningful relationship.

So you should look to have non-sales call to action on your site, at which point you're saying

'Hey, download this thing of value which will help you better understand your pain, I only need your email address to make it so'

This is much less friction than:

'Hey, I might not get this and I may never respond but could you please just give me your title, first name, last name, phone number, email and a message and I'll give you nothing in return... at least not for a few days anyway'

Can you guess which one is more successful?

In order to nurture your prospects with content via email you're going to need to first create something of value be that an ebook, cheat sheet, content review, website review, code review, a short course or even a sample of your service.

Elisa Doucette, a freelance editor offers a free copy review with 500 words of content. All you have to do is email in your content.

This type of no-brainer call to action is great, because it takes away the time cost of actually creating something like an ebook, course or video.

From there you would set up a follow-up (also known as an 'autoresponder') sequence of emails.

These will be received by the prospect over a fixed period of time. You can set these up relatively inexpensively using Campaign Monitor, MailChimp or a great platform GetDrip.com ([3 months free with this link](#)) which takes care of the styling and actual slide-in functionality to grab the attention of the visitor.

10. Pass a user test

Your job doesn't end once you've built out your site with these key elements. There are lots of tools around for gathering second opinions, here two free options:

[Fivesecondtest](#)

UsabilityHub have a great platform for reciprocal reviewing of designs. So you can screenshot yours and upload it into Fivesecondtest. From there you can either decide to pay for user tests or gather up points by reviewing the work of others.

[Peek by Usertesting.com](#)

With this platform you can get a free, five minute review of your site by a complete stranger. It's fascinating watching someone else use your site, they will interact in a completely different way to you.

With these platforms you can check for:

- › Whether it's clear instantly what you offer
- › How easy it is to locate your experience and other work
- › Whether your site is easy to navigate
- › How likely it would be for users to stick around

All of this gives you the opportunity to learn from third parties. You should also share your site in the Freelancelift community and on the Freelancelift Pro Slack channel to get feedback directly from your peers.

In closing

In closing, I just wanted to give you some final words of encouragement. Your site doesn't have to be something you own 'just because everyone else has one'.

It has the potential to deliver leads into your business, which can ultimately create long term, meaningful client relationships.

I've laid out in this book ideas for getting more out of your site but please interpret and implement in the way that feels most comfortable to you, based on these ideas. It's a fundamental aspect of your online presence though and something that needs to be in a great place prior to going out and attracting attention.

As I covered earlier, this needn't be a complete overhaul either or a long, drawn out project. Don't be afraid to move into a DIY site builder platform, speed and efficiency will help you achieve a sense of momentum.

I look forward to seeing what you come up with!

GETTING MORE FROM YOUR SITE

Share your thoughts and progress at freelancelift.com/community

This was short book for
Freelancelift Pro members.

freelancelift

