



Constantly evaluate what value you bring

Freelancers How To Build A Creative Career

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Being based in Los Angeles allows me an up close look at freelancers of all kinds. From Hollywood, the advertising industry, web companies, production companies and more, I'm able to work with and study a wide range of creative professionals on a daily basis. Some last and others don't, and few people can put their finger on why some achieve success and others fail. But if you're a freelancer in any creative field, here's what I've discovered that – regardless of talent – makes a powerful difference in building a long career:

1. Find Your Ultimate Niche – In my experience, the vast majority of career freelancers aren't doing what they actually came to Hollywood to do. Over a career, actors become casting directors, a director becomes the media person for a local church or non-profit, camera operators become grips, musicians become agents, designers become executives – the list is endless. It doesn't mean your dream can't be accomplished, but if necessary, be ready to change horses in the middle of the stream. It's not about "*settling*" as much as adjusting to the marketplace. The industry changes, styles change, technology changes, so don't become so locked into a single job that you refuse to adapt to new opportunities.

2. Constantly Question Your Purpose – Another way to put it is to "*keep asking why*". Why am I doing this in the first place? I drive our team at Cooke Pictures crazy because I'm constantly asking why we exist and what that means for us and our clients. Never get complacent,

because creative challenges never end. What's the '*why*' for you? Are you doing this for money? To help others? To find significance? There are plenty of potential answers, and no one can decide but you and God. But after writing my book "***One Big Thing: Discovering What You Were Born to Do***", I can tell you that finding your purpose will be the most motivating and satisfying thing a creative person can do for a long term career.

3. Keep Learning – Gain expertise in your field. Become an authority in an area. One of the best ways to stand out and get noticed is to be the best in a particular job, task, or niche. Why should I hire you over someone else? How much more do you know about your field than you did last year? If you're not growing you're shrinking, and nobody wants to hire someone based on what their talent used to be.

4. Constantly evaluate what value you bring to your employer – Your "*employer*" might be a studio, advertising agency, TV station or network, web company, digital studio, nonprofit, or all of the above. Just because you're a "*freelancer*" doesn't mean you don't have a boss – in fact, you now have multiple bosses. What's the value you're bringing to each project and client? How are you helping them achieve their goals?

These questions aren't designed for a "once in 5 year evaluation" session – they're designed to be asked weekly – even daily. That's how you'll continue to exist – and prosper – in a freelance world.

Don't be a one hit wonder. Start now planning for a creative career that lasts.