CHAPTER 1

Starting Out with Vision

Introduction

Do you know your value as a freelancer? Do you know how to uncover your voice as an artist? Think about why you want to start up as a freelancer: it could well be focused on your drive to develop your creativity and practice, your motivation to do something that is different or beyond the 9–5 of a usual work week, or it could be the sense deep inside that you'd like to acknowledge yourself as *the artist*.

The purpose of the chapter is to have a clearer idea about the individual aspects of being a freelancer:

- knowing yourself better, both strengths and weaknesses
- having a sense of your own personal creative vision
- developing processes and tools that will support your vision.

So You Want to Be a Creative Freelancer

Artists are often tempted to work as freelancers because freelance work can enable them to have the freedom to work on their creative practice and set their own hours. But, as we will find throughout this book, freelancing comes in many shapes and sizes and is not the ideal job for everyone. Freelance work often requires combining a creative vision with a practical streak that enables the freelancer to chase up invoices and manage timelines on multiple projects. It requires an ability to think outside the box and be resilient in the face of rejections and setbacks. There are many ways to make freelancing work for you, but a key component for each of them is an understanding of the way you work best, your strengths and weaknesses.

Finding a freelancer identity that works for you

A creative freelancer works in an area of the creative industries, which can include the areas of music and performing arts; film, television and radio; advertising and marketing; software development and interactive content; writing, publishing and print media; and architecture, design and visual arts. Freelancing has become a term indicating someone who is self-employed, running a micro business or creative enterprise, or developing and managing a series of projects. Creative freelancers develop a creative practice, but much of their time is also spent on administrative tasks: doing their tax, emails, writing grant applications, recovering their motivation from receiving rejections to grant applications, networking with other artists, writing publicity material for projects and raising income, to name just a few tasks. Creative freelancers make artwork, but that is only part of the story: it is everything else that makes a sustainable freelance practice. You would need to be very lucky indeed to become successful on your artistic product alone.

Creative freelancers often balance different forms of work; not all of them are completely arts-related. Throsby and Zednik, in 2010, found that the average Australian professional artist spent 53 per cent of their time on their creative work, 10 per cent on other creative work, 17 per cent on arts-related work and 20 per cent on non-arts work. The average hours worked per week for an artist were about 41 hours. Breaking these down into a weekly schedule, this meant they spent 22 hours a week on their main creative practice, four hours on creative work not related to their practice, seven hours in another paid arts-related occupation and eight hours on non-arts related paid work (Throsby & Zednik, 2010). Generally, two-thirds of the artists surveyed would have preferred to spend more time on creating artwork.

In the beginning it might not be practical to work full time on your creative practice. Creative freelancers often combine jobs out of financial necessity or from a natural inclination to work on a variety of projects at once. People who have a

career made up of several different segments at the same time or divided between a number of separate jobs—for example, teaching music three evenings a week, some part-time work composing music for an advertising agency, and composing and playing music the rest of the time—are said to have *portfolio careers*. In an article reviewing freelancer skills in ArtsHub (Dore, 2015), creative freelancers explained that building multiple skills was vital for their success. Each of the freelancers interviewed found that through this process they were able to have a better understanding of their skills and discover what work made them most happy. Instead of being confined by a conventional position description, they were able to revisit their childhood dreams where it seemed possible to be both a musician and a film-maker. As manager/teacher/volunteer Christian Stena stated: 'It's really about us being able to bring to life all the different components that make us up and make us who we are, rather than investing everything into one particular basket' (Dore, 2015). If you think outside the box when working out your career path, you may find that it helps you to keep working in the area you love and still make a living.

A portfolio career isn't for everyone. It is necessary to build a diverse set of skills and wear different hats, creating job titles such as writer/editor/teacher/arts administrator. Creative freelancers who develop a diverse range of skills can move from their specialist practice to jobs as arts administrators when they need to supplement their income. They also need to spend time developing these different skills that might not seem directly related to their creative practice and therefore a waste of time. Whether this is seen as an opportunity or a detrimental constraint depends on the attitude of the individual artist, as well as an understanding of the way they work best.

FREELANCE FOLIO:
Documenting your creative practice

Part 1: Finding points of creativity

Think about when you first displayed creativity: what was it? How old were you? Were you encouraged to be creative? Did your creative activities grow? Is it something you just can't stop doing? The idea is to track your creative growth, from when you first noticed it through to how you developed your practice. It is also worth thinking about how you have shown your creativity in other areas not directly related to making artwork. Have you used creative problem-solving skills in other areas, such as in work environments? Perhaps you have been more creative than you realised.

Part 2: How has your past affected your creative process and style?

Think back to where you grew up: what kind of landscape and communities were you surrounded by? What was the suburb like? Think about school: which teachers or lessons or books do you remember? What was it about them that stuck with you? Write down these points

from your past that you remember and that you think are important to you. This exercise is not to find out when you have been creative, but to look at all other areas of your life that shape the way you might think about the world. This could be the fact that you grew up in the country and this has given you an aesthetic view of the world around you that might be different from someone born and bred in a city. It might be that a teacher you admired encouraged your creative style, which gave you the confidence to believe a creative career was worth pursuing. By finding contexts and events that impact your aesthetic style and by finding the mentors who have impressed you, you can highlight aspects of your creative practice that are unique to you. This is a documentation of your creative practice.

Part 3: Developing your creative methodology

Once you have looked at your past influences, consider how these may shape your future directions. Perhaps you can look at the career trajectory of your past mentors: can this be a model for how you shape your career? Is there a theme that you can develop that will make your work unique? Throughout this book, think about how these past themes could shape your future choices.

Working Creatively

Knowing the way you work best

Knowing how you develop new ideas is useful for understanding the ways you work best. Perhaps you need a long incubation time to develop projects or maybe you thrive on working on various projects at once. Freelancing is very much about your practice and yourself. It is about how you approach projects, your idiosyncratic style. How you think and create are actually part of your business of creation, but also the way you live—your work, part-time jobs, relationships and aspirations for the future. Knowing more about yourself and the way you process information will reflect on your lifestyle as well as your approach to your creative business.

Personality inventories

Part of knowing the way you work best is to understand your natural preferences and instinctive reactions in situations. There are various psychological testing tools that can help you to work this out—one of these is the Myers–Briggs Personality Indicator™. Myers and Briggs developed the indicator to make Carl Jung's theory of psychological types easier for people to use in their everyday lives. Depending on your preferences in the way you work, the tool will provide four letters that will place you in one of the sixteen personality types. The questionnaire takes into consideration things such as whether you prefer social situations or quiet reflection, or whether you make decisions using logic or feelings. In each case, it is not a matter of

either/or, but a position on a scale, depending on the strength of an individual's preferences. You can refer to the Myers–Briggs website at the end of this chapter to get more details of each of the personality types.

Knowing your preferences is useful firstly for knowing how you respond to situations and why you might find some tasks difficult. It can also help you to understand the reactions of others when working in a team. If you can't understand why someone just isn't communicating as much as you'd like, think about whether this is something they are comfortable doing. If they focus on their inner world as a preference, maybe they don't see the need to communicate as much. Being aware of these different preferences can help you understand why people respond in certain ways, which can help in solving problems when working with others.

When photographer and film-maker Timothy Syrota, who often works with immigrant communities, was asked about the possible challenges of working with community groups, he seemed baffled. Getting strangers to open up to him is something that comes naturally to him and he couldn't explain how it might be difficult. His approach is to be friendly and to approach any of his subjects with an open manner and lack of cultural judgments. This is not something that he thinks much about as it is the way he approaches any social interaction, but being able to chat easily with strangers is not everyone's skill. Think about your own preferences: would you find it intimidating or energising getting to know large groups of new people on a regular basis?

Writer Benjamin Law touches upon personality types when he explains his use of Twitter. 'Writing's a really solitary act and most writers are introverts by nature,' he says. 'That doesn't mean that they're shy but it means that their default mode isn't public.' This is something that he recognises in himself as he refers to himself as an introvert. Humans are still social by nature, so Benjamin uses Twitter to 'be in the public realm but in a private space', which suits his personality well. This is not so much a case of working with others as an awareness of how he can be social and communicate with others without being overwhelmed. For Benjamin, it is one way to connect with a community in a form that he is comfortable with.

Some of the personality styles surveys and questionnaires on the market provide insights into how and why you think and create as you do. For instance, the psychologist David Keirsey has developed a temperament sorter that can give you an indication of how you can analyse your temperament: idealist, artisan, rational, guardian. Keirsey (2015) said:

> those of the Artisan temperament are predisposed—born—to impulsive action, those of the Guardian temperament to responsible service, those of the Idealist temperament to personal development, and those of the Rational temperament to objective analysis. Each type of person, unless blocked or deflected by an unfavourable environment, will develop the habits of character appropriate to his or her temperament.

These personality analysis tools are based on studies of the way humans work and can be a useful tool for analysing your reactions and processes. But they are only an indicator, a chance to see yourself objectively. In order to work out if you are suited to a freelance career, you need to realistically assess your strengths and weaknesses.

FREELANCE FOLIO:
Personal strengths and weaknesses

What sort of person are you? Consider the following activity to get you thinking about how you would describe yourself to somebody else.

Ask a colleague to write down what they think are your five strengths and five weaknesses. Perhaps you could do the same thing for them. At the same time, write down your own list, and see how it compares with your colleague's idea of you.

Some examples of strengths could be that you are able to work with a team, or that you are practical or well organised.

Some examples of weaknesses might include procrastinating, panicking when there are last-minute changes or avoiding tasks you're not comfortable with, such as budgets or administration.

You might find the following chart useful for both your list and the list prepared by your colleague. It's important to list your strengths and weaknesses in priority listing (1 for the strongest through to 5 for the weakest), using both your own and your colleague's perspectives.

STRENGTHS	PRIORITY ORDER	WEAKNESSES	PRIORITY ORDER

By understanding your strengths and weaknesses you can develop a number of useful skills and insights:

- create a way of working or routine that suits you
- learn what kinds of projects or jobs you are best suited to
- work out what areas you need help or training in
- understand why you might procrastinate in areas that you are not confident in
- understand how others see you—they might actually perceive strengths in you that you might have missed or undervalued.

Remember that this list can change. If you identify a weakness that is very important to your creative practice, you can learn to master it.

Further thoughts

What do you think are some of the skills or attitudes that are indispensible for creative freelancers? Do they match up with your strengths? What areas do you think you need to work on to become a confident creative freelancer? From reading examples from the interviews and the case studies between chapters, make a list of some of the common skills creative freelancers have.

We are inclined to believe that others think and process the way we do, and that can lead to a lack of consideration of other ways of doing things. This doesn't help creative processes as colleagues with similar approaches are inclined to group together, and this may lead to a certain homogeneity of approach. The Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire™ talks of group learning approaches as roles. Based on the work of experiential learning theorist David Kolb, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford identified four learning preferences: the activist, the reflector, the pragmatist and the theorist.

Activist

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now, and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new.

Reflector

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both firsthand and from others, and prefer to think through all the information thoroughly before coming to a conclusion. They tend to be cautious and delay making conclusions as a result.

Pragmatist

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They deliberately search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They try to find a better way to do things.

Theorist

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step-by-step logical way. They tend to be perfectionists who try to fit things into a rational scheme.

If there are four reflector-type colleagues working together, there is a very strong chance that there will be a lot of thinking and researching, and a lack of will to move into action. If an activist-type colleague comes into the group, that will potentially lead to some tensions but the group will achieve results as it is energised into testing the ideas of the reflectors. If you are looking for something to actually be completed, to have an outcome, you might search for a pragmatist-style collaborator but if the project requires exploration of a problem or point of view, evidence to support or refute that point of view in a logical sequence, then a theorist-oriented collaborator will be useful. There is no simple definitive role within which we all remain—these are fluid positions we take up when working on projects or tasks. But, in times of stress we will revert to our preferred learning style, and that is when problems can occur with creative projects. Knowing not only your preferred styles, but also those of collaborators can lead to some very fruitful partnerships and interesting projects. The tensions that may arise will also generate different creative results from the ones initially expected.

Learning about yourself through these tools is useful and fun, however it is not conclusive. The more you know about your preferred ways of operating, the better you will be at developing alternative ways of thinking about creative problems, and working in collaborations or networks with others.

Motivation

Motivating means getting people to do something because they want to do it. There have been many studies into what is called intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (see for example, Deci, 2000; Kreps, 1997; Reeve, 2009; Reiss, 2012; Richard, 2000; Staw, 1975). Extrinsic motivators are elements that are external, like money or praise from someone else. You have limited ability to influence these. Intrinsic motivators come from within you. These can include doing satisfying work with clear goals, being optimistic about chances of success in an endeavour, having a sense of social connection and the chance to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

According to psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, when a person loves the work they do, they are able to enter into an optimal experience which he calls *flow*. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) identified nine elements that people described when they were having an enjoyable experience:

1. clear goals at every step
2. immediate feedback for their actions
3. balance between challenges and skills
4. action and experience merge (when their attention is focused entirely on what they're doing)
5. distractions are excluded
6. failure is not a concern
7. self-consciousness disappears

8. sense of time becomes distorted
9. the activity is worth doing for its own sake (not just for earning money, for example).

The creative people Csikszentmihalyi interviewed who were able to obtain this flow in their work were more satisfied and had a deeper sense of well-being. This is important for two reasons: firstly, getting into the flow while creating leads to more productivity (and less procrastinating); and secondly, a sense of satisfaction in one's work can help as motivation.

A similar framework has been investigated by game theorists who use the idea of play as a way to motivate people to learn and participate in problem solving. Jane McGonigal (2011) argued that games make us happy because they are hard work that we choose ourselves. She goes on to describe the traits of a game: it needs a goal, fixed rules, a feedback system and voluntary participation. With these elements people are motivated to work hard, even if it gets difficult or the rewards seem minimal. Just think about the amount of time people spend playing video games, perfecting their skill in increasingly more difficult scenarios, when the impact of success on their daily lives might be minimal. It certainly won't get them a pay-rise. But, when it imitates the structure of a game, work can become fun rather than a chore, and when we enjoy an activity it is easier to do.

Think of Csikszentmihalyi's nine points and reflect on your creative practice. Do you find that there is something getting in the way of your concentration when you are working? For example, are you being interrupted with thoughts about how you might fail? Or perhaps you stop your work several times to check Twitter or email? Perhaps you can't get into a project because you need to learn a new skill (perhaps a specific technique you have not used before) that you really need some help with or perhaps you've been working alone for a while and have no idea if what you are doing is any good.

Individual creative freelancers will need to find personal strategies that work for them but perhaps the most challenging issue is immediate feedback. Writing a book, for example, may take years and it can be easy to lose motivation during that time, especially if there is no way to test ideas. There are some simple strategies to use to seek out feedback:

• building a network of peers with whom you can share your work
• looking for a mentor to help guide you through a new project or skill
• becoming involved in relevant online forums to get feedback for a work in progress
• joining a local artists' group.

Eventually you might develop an internal barometer that will give you feedback on your work as you develop it. This often happens when you have a very good understanding of your creative sector, from knowing what the industry standards are.

Obviously being a creative freelancer can't be fun all the time. By finding strategies that work for you, it can be easier to motivate yourself at those more difficult times.

FREELANCE FOLIO:
Motivation factors

Here is a list of factors that motivate people. Select five factors you consider most important. Then ask other people you know well to select the five they consider most motivating.

☐ Recognition for work well done   ☐ Relating well with co-workers

☐ Delegation of responsibility   ☐ Relating well with supervisors

☐ Job security   ☐ Competent supervision of your work

☐ Adequate working conditions   ☐ The work itself

☐ Wages or salary   ☐ Good administration

☐ Opportunity for advancement   ☐ Your status in relation to others

☐ Feeling of achievement   ☐ Challenge

Which five factors were most commonly agreed to be the best motivators? Why do you think they were similar? Were there links through your creative practice, or because of the types of personal connections you have with each other? Were any factors consistently disregarded by everybody? What does that tell you about your preferred way to develop your creative practice?

Finding the Right Direction

Vision is about building ideas into something that has a value, to yourself and to others. Think about a novel or film or painting that has a lasting effect on you. It is not just the beautifully crafted visuals or words, but the combination of ideas around a creative vision.

There is nothing that excites and motivates people like a vision to accomplish something special. Vision is a comprehensive sense of where you are now, where you are going, how you are going to get there, and what you will do when you arrive.

Vision is feeling challenged by the world and being compelled to make a mark on it through the force of your own ideas, personality, resources and desires.

Vision must be focused and specific. If it is too broad, it is easy to flounder and become discouraged. Set realistic and attainable goals, otherwise you will become discouraged and discourage others you work with.

A vision statement uses key words that explain what the focus will be. Vision statements can help to constantly review why you want to do this work, particularly when you are starting to lose motivation or feel discouraged.

Director Zoe Pepper outlines her vision and mission in two paragraphs on her website:

Side Pony Productions supports the productions of director Zoe Pepper. Under her leadership the company creates predominantly devised theatre; building fresh new performance through a well-trodden devising process. Side Pony strives to make innovative theatre that is an engaging, smart celebration of humanity. All Side Pony's work is laced with a deep sense of irony and the use of comedy to create empathy is pivotal.

What drives the process is a love of story, a diligence to create enduring plot structures and a commitment to creating characters that reflect the many contradictions of the human condition especially the conflicting notion that good people do bad things. Alongside creating works for black box theatres the company is beginning to move into new and sometimes less conventional theatrical forms as well as film.

It would be possible for Zoe's work to seem much like any other theatre company. To narrow the field and to give a quick impression of her work, Zoe emphasises several unique features:

- what type of theatre she produces (devised theatre)
- the creative genre and aesthetic (comedy, specifically using irony and empathy)
- the values (love of story, realistic characters, characters who are conflicted).

She has also given a suggestion of the future direction of the company. The sentences are short and to the point and her work is summarised in just two paragraphs.

It is important to develop such descriptions not only for websites, but also for grant proposals, for social media such as Twitter or Facebook and for biographies to accompany promotional material at events. If you are consistent in your descriptions, the public, sponsors and patrons, get to know your work and have confidence that you know exactly what it is that you do.

You may need to do a lot of work and analysis of what it is that you want to do. For example, a statement that says 'Casey works on writing, directing, and acting in theatre pieces about the human condition' is too vague. It might also be confusing as the public might not be clear as to what Casey's core work is. Is Casey mainly a writer or does Casey prefer to foster an acting career? This is particularly relevant when applying for grants—the funders want to know how the artist will be spending their time and money. It is normal to do many roles, especially in the beginning of a career, but keep in mind that you can't do all the roles all the time.

On the other hand, being too specific can cut out opportunities. For example, a statement may say 'Li's practice involves working on small jewellery pieces in silver sold at local markets'. Does this mean Li would not be interested in working on a bigger piece for an exhibition if given a grant for it? Does it mean Li wouldn't be interested in working in collaboration with a woodworker?

Looking back at the example from Zoe Pepper, we see that although she mentions what type of theatre she creates (devised theatre) most of the description centres around a vision of the type of work she aims to create. By saying 'All Side

Pony's work is laced with a deep sense of irony and the use of comedy to create empathy is pivotal', she is giving a very clear description of the work (you would not expect them to produce a light slapstick comedy or a tragedy) but it allows for growth in the work she develops. She is able to do large or small plays, plays for different types of stages. She could work on plays in non-theatre spaces or, as she states later, plays that incorporate technology. In addition, by working consistently on the same genre and style, her company is able to build skills and expertise in the area that other companies might not have.

Often the vision is something that you develop behind the scenes and it might not be something you put on your website. It is still useful to write out your vision, even if it is just for yourself. A vision helps you define which direction you would like to aim for, as well as highlighting the areas that you are most interested in. It helps you to keep on track and evaluate if a project is worth doing—if it contributes to where you want your career to go—or if it is a distraction.

Planning through vision and objectives

How can you develop a focused vision for your freelance practice? If you have a clear plan, it will help to keep you motivated and assist in your decision-making. A plan needs to be based on a vision, goals and objectives that clearly outline both your dreams and motivations for the freelance practice and how you can achieve that vision and goal.

Table 1.1 provides a summary of key terms and how they may relate to freelancing in the creative industries.

Table 1.1   Key planning terms as they apply to freelancing in the creative industries

TERM	DEFINITION	APPLICATION
Vision	Dream or ultimate view of achievement	The vision provides direction, focus and motivation. The freelance artist can apply that personal vision to decide on appropriate projects, to undertake collaborations with others and to maintain integrity of purpose.
Mission	Statement of business	This indicates the reason for existence of the freelance practice. As this is closely aligned with vision for a creative artist, a mission statement is often blended into the vision by freelancers. In creative freelance terms, the mission will define your current and future practice in relation to arts product, audience or customer, and the market price, for example. The mission can help with decisions on where to direct resources.
Goals	Results to be achieved	Goals define and describe future aims and ambitions, directly related to vision. Goals help to guide everyday decisions and actions, but are not necessarily measurable.
Objectives	Actions and results in measuring achievement of the goals.	Objectives describe activities that will achieve goals, with specific results, measures and timelines indicated. Can be changed as they achieve progress towards goals.

The terms indicate the series of steps to take in developing a planning structure. It is worth noting that many of these planning structures may already grow organically as you develop your practice.

Developing your vision, goals and objectives

Vision

Think about why you feel compelled to set up your creative practice. Now find a way to describe it to someone else. This is often called an *elevator pitch*, a way of explaining yourself during the time it takes for an elevator to take you from the ground floor to about the eighth floor (about one minute). How would you describe your creative practice in one sentence?

One way to develop what it is you really want to achieve is to read the vision statements of artists you admire. Check out the websites of artists in the same creative domain as yourself. Alternatively, select an artist who you think you could work with, a potential collaborator. You might use the case study artists in this book as a starting point—some have clearly articulated visions, while for others you need to explore their processes and finished work to find what motivates them and keeps them engaged in their art.

Another approach is to consider leaders in your field, as models you aspire to emulate. For instance you may wish to explore the vision of Peter Carey who has written such a variety of books, or Baz Luhrmann with his film oeuvre.

Developing a vision can be difficult. Here's one way a writer set up the process.

- I looked for … key words for a vision that represents me:
    - adaptable, flexible in style of writing—like writing across disciplines
    - multiple project experience—interest in being interdisciplinary because I like a challenge, learning something new
    - good at managing lots of different projects—organised and able to listen to client briefings, save time by synthesising requirements of different clients
    - I am motivated by—losing track of time when I write, being excited by the words that create another world, sharing the world with others, transforming other people's ideas into words and images …
- I searched for … other visions:
    - My name is Gabby O'Connor. I am an artist and I like to make things. I also like icebergs and science. (https://gabbyoconnor.wordpress.com/about/)
    - Next Wave—OUR VISION: A world of extraordinary opportunity, massive dreams realised, cultural norms disrupted and new dialogues in contemporary arts practice and emergent culture. (http://nextwave.org.au/about–next–wave/)

- Arts Tasmania: Our vision is a robust, diverse, vibrant arts sector in Tasmania which is valued by Tasmanians and which is nationally and internationally recognised. A Tasmania where all communities are artistically vibrant places with rich and varied creative opportunities. Communities where the arts are collaborative, accessible and inclusive to all. (arts.tas.gov.au/about_us/arts_tasmania_vision_statement)

(Group visions are often more broad-based, representing larger and more diverse arts activities.)

- I developed a draft vision statement:
  - I am a writer who can listen to stories and recreate them in any way I find creative and transformative. And my (ghost) editor is always telling me how to reshape, redraft, repurpose for my audiences.

FREELANCE FOLIO:
Developing your vision

Find three to five examples of vision statements from other artists.

Make bullet points of the top three things you want to achieve. Think of it as answering the question: where do you want to be in five years? Then construct your one-sentence statement of a vision. Think about how you would represent this on a website or other social media platform.

When you have your vision clear, you will be able to construct a goal and four or five objectives that arise from this vision statement.

Goals and objectives

Think about your personal goals. They will probably be tied to your major motivators. Do you want to make money? Get recognition as a creative artist? Meet interesting creative people? When you have looked at your personal goals, look at how much they are in harmony with what you are hoping to achieve from your business. Personal goals will give you energy and drive to devote to business.

When starting out as a freelance writer at seventeen, Benjamin Law's goal was to become a feature writer for magazines. This was a broad-brush view that gave him a direction to aim for in the field of writing. He realised that he needed to carve out his career options after graduating from a somewhat generalist creative writing degree, so he was always looking out for work experience opportunities where he could develop set skills. To become a feature writer, he developed several general steps:

- volunteer with the street press (to understand how a magazine works, to learn how to file stories)
- write the gig listings for the street press
- write short paragraphs from press releases for the street press
- interview people and write 600-word articles for the street press
- edit the student newspaper
- write for a metropolitan newspaper
- write for magazines like *frankie*
- write 4000-word long-form feature stories (which is part of what he's doing now).

Much of the early work was basic and not all that interesting, but it allowed Benjamin to hone his craft and learn about the industry. The whole time he kept his main goal in mind, making decisions based on the fact he wanted to be a feature writer. Working with the street press was therefore still relevant to his end goal. Benjamin developed objectives based on his knowledge of the industry (you need to do an apprenticeship at smaller journals before you can be competitive as a feature writer) and other objectives to carry out his goal (to write for various publications, from small press to national publications). You can see that each step is incremental and specific.

Film-maker and photographer Timothy Syrota often works on creative projects that can last for years and that develop as he works on them, and finds new ways to achieve them. For these projects his end goals are not as clear as Benjamin's, so the way he manages his goals is by having a number of outcomes he is happy with. The ideal option might be to have his photos published in a book format, but if that is not possible, then he has other alternatives that he would be equally happy with. For example, if a photo wins an award, if one is accepted in a journal or if it is shown as part of an exhibition he is also happy with the outcome. By having various options, he manages his expectations and will not be disappointed if he doesn't achieve the ideal outcome. This flexibility can be important as it is not always possible to control how your work will be received and you need to plan your goals accordingly.

Writing objectives is not an easy task. Here are some simple guidelines:
- Keep them brief. If you write more than twenty words for each objective you've probably listed two together.
- Don't include your rationale ('why I …' or 'because …') for the objective, just write down the statement.
- Use positive language—'I will …' not 'I would like to …'
- Think about objectives that are specific, related to your preferred income, the level of recognition you want, whether your practice will grow in particular directions or move to another location.

SMART principles

SMART is a simple acronym to remember how to write down your business objectives:

- *Specific*—objectives need to be tangible and able to be seen by everyone. Keep them simple, and develop several objectives to avoid getting too general and unclear.
- *Measurable*—if you cannot measure something, you cannot manage it. You need to know whether you have reached your objectives through some sort of quantifiable term, for example, increase creative work from five paintings to twenty in two years.
- *Achievable*—if your objectives are unattainable you will lose motivation. They need to be challenging enough that you will have incentive to reach them but still attainable.
- *Relevant*—objectives should contribute to the business, and be of benefit. Express your objectives so that they describe what you want to achieve. Consider the long term and relate your objectives to it.
- *Time-targeted*—specify when the objective is to be achieved by. This helps you to keep an eye on progress, rather than making excuses about the time taken.

FREELANCE FOLIO:
Developing your goals and objectives

Find examples of goals and objectives listed by other artists.

List up to three goals. It can be useful for each goal to have a different focus and time frame: for example goals may be related to the three areas of local arts output, international research and professional development. They may be short term (for the next six months), medium term (for the next one to two years), or long term. For each goal, list four or five objectives. Make sure they are based on the SMART principles.

Remember, you can change your objectives as you find your goals are achieved or change. This planning process is there to assist your progress as a freelancer.

Moving from objectives to action

But how to turn your written objectives into action? In order to make the overall vision seem manageable, it's important to break the objectives down to achievable tasks. Look at Table 1.2 to see how the goal and objectives move in a step-by–step process from the inspiration of the vision, to specific actions.

When you set up objectives, they will reflect the major goals you want to achieve and help to motivate you to measure those SMART elements of your freelancing practice.

Table 1.2 The process flow for developing objectives into an action plan

STEP	OUTCOMES OF STEPS	EXAMPLE
State your vision	Vision statement that includes your motivation and purpose	I am a writer and I like to create stories
Develop the goal	Statement that indicates the desired outcome for your practice	To make money from my writing by becoming a freelance writer
Develop objectives	Brief, clearly defined and measurable outcomes	So that I can make a profit in six months; take holidays with family yearly; go overseas in three years to research other work
Develop strategic tasks to achieve the objectives	This is the process that will achieve each objective	List of steps, for example: pitch to ten magazines by May; publish three feature articles by December
Set up structures and frameworks that will support the objectives	Performance standards that will be a part of the operation of the business	Administrative and communication standards for maintaining quality, service, credit/payment and so on

The motivation of the planning process will come from your vision, goals and objectives. Your goal may be linked to a dream or vision, or a way of life. It is a broad-brush view. It may not even be in written form, just be the reason that you have started the business. The objectives provide answers to 'How will I achieve this goal?' They should be clearly defined and measurable, and they should be written or represented in some way visually as a clear reminder of your future planning.

Planning may seem like it gets in the way of your artistic practice but it will actually save time, assisting you in making decisions about future directions and possible opportunities. The following chapters in this book will assist in making sense of the key elements of marketing, organisational and financial planning. All these aspects of planning grow from the vision, goals and objectives you will develop for your own freelance practice.

Summary

We have looked at the importance of understanding the way you work and have provided advice on how this knowledge can be useful for your freelance practice. We have also examined how to develop your vision, through planning of goals and objectives. By thinking about two crucial aspects of your practice—how you work and what you want to achieve—right from the start, you are able to develop your practice with realistic expectations. Freelancing isn't for everyone and it can be very challenging, but it is also possible to acquire the right skills to become successful.

Networking might be an important part of being a freelancer, but this does not mean that introverts are not able to run a freelance business. Rather it means that you need to be aware of the way you work best, plan your strategy and motivate yourself to occasionally work in ways that you find challenging. Your creative freelance career is driven by you; there is no one way to do it, so think big and plan for success.

By the end of this chapter you will have developed your Freelance Folio by completing these activities:

- documenting your creative practice
- recognising your personal strengths and weaknesses
- identifying the factors that motivate you
- developing your vision
- developing your goals and objectives.

Further exploration

Archer, R., 2009, 'Industry That Pays and Art That Doesn't', *Griffith Review*, vol. 23, https://griffithreview.com/articles/industry-that-pays-and-art-that-doesnt.

de Bono, E., 1970, 'Difference between lateral and vertical thinking', *Lateral Thinking*, London, Penguin Books.

Mackay, H., 2010, *What Makes Us Tick? The Ten Desires That Drive Us*, Sydney, Hachette.

Tan, S., & R. Hughes, 2012, *Creative Minds: Six of Australia's Leading Artists Talk Revealingly about Their Art*, Special Broadcasting Services, distributed by Madman Entertainment.

Tools

Creativity quotes: http://twistedsifter.com/2012/03/15-famous-quotes-on-creativity

The Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire™: www.peterhoney.com/content/tools-learningstyles.html

Keirsey Temperament Sorter®: www.keirsey.com

Myers–Briggs Personality Indicator™: www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/

The VARK questionnaire by Neil Fleming: http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/

Isobel Knowles

Tax is actually quite relaxing.

Isobel is a Melbourne-based artist and animator. Her multidisciplinary practice spans short film, interactive installation, cross-platform performance, music, painting, photography, illustration, music videos, commercials and whatever else comes along. Her projects fall into three main categories:

- funded art projects (often by government grants) where she works in a team and the end product is often shown in a gallery
- commissions from the private sector
- music videos, which operate in a similar way to the private commissions but for the music industry.

Isobel first stumbled upon her career path midway through high school. 'It was a very random occurrence, I'm sure I would have come to it eventually, but it just happened that in high school we had these fake jobs that we had to apply for and we had this job search book and I just flipped to a page and I put my finger on a word and it was "animation". I was really into doing lots of different art things, and in that naïve time I was just like "oh yeah, that means that I could do music and I could do drawing and I could do sculpture and I could put it all together". It just seemed like the perfect thing for me to be able to explore everything I was interested in at the time. And it has, amusingly, become my life, this fifteen-year-old's decision.'

For Isobel, the process of establishing a vision for her creative practice ebbs and flows. Sometimes she will sit down and nut out the types of projects she would like to work on. This might come after an intense period of working on big art projects or it might happen when she starts to get bored doing the same types of projects (Isobel likes to challenge herself).

A lot of her work in the past has come from friends, connections in the artistic community and grants that she's applied for. Until now she has been able to mostly take on work that she believes strongly in.

This has included animating songs for bands or animating for ethical companies such as Who Gives a Crap, a toilet paper company that donates 50 per cent of its profits to improve sanitation in the developing world.

Now Isobel is considering the need to branch out to more diverse companies, but she emphasises that in doing this, she would like to choose projects that offer other advantages besides money. An example is working for a larger company: it might provide the opportunity to work on a challenging project that is bigger in scope, and she might therefore be able to experiment in new ways. The capacity to experiment can sometimes be limited in other projects due to small budgets.

But Isobel would not choose a project just for the money. She highlights that you need to make sure you're always getting something out of it, whether that's being engaged in the creative vision, whether you believe in and want to contribute to the vision of the company or whether you can develop your own creative practice or skills. When choosing a project she asks herself: am I learning something? Am I developing new skills?

- You need to be reliable. People want to work with someone who can deliver what they say they will on time with the minimum of fuss. They want to work with someone who is easy to work with.

- Trust is very important when working with freelancers. It's all very well to know what kind of work an artist does, but you have to be able to trust them to deliver.

- Trust in your instinct, no matter how strange the choices might seem at the time.

- To keep from getting bored, make sure to have diverse types of projects.

- Make sure you are getting something out of the projects you choose, in addition to money.

- At the beginning of the project discuss how each member of the team will be credited and write up an agreement clarifying this. If the team can't agree, maybe you will need to find others to work with.

Isobel's website: www.isobelknowles.com/

Isobel Knowles and Van Souverine