



# MINDS

HOW ADVERTISING  
CREATIVES FREELANCE.

# FOR

# RENT<sup>©</sup>

BY KEVIN AMTER

## Forward

“Enviably” was what many of my creative advertising peers called my life as a freelancer. They saw me produce creative work, surf Montauk during the summers, and survive financially, so some decided to try it for themselves.

Ninety-eight percent of them went back to agency staff positions within a year (and many of these colleagues are now successful full-time staffers.)

Freelancing is not as easy as it seems. If it were, every creative would do it full time. But it requires a very different mindset from that of a staffer, and has its own set of issues.

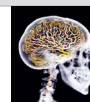
My father, who is a turn-around CEO, has always been a great proponent of networking. I’ve never been very good at it myself, though I did inherit his perseverance. Advertising is a business of perseverance: that particular quality is essential in order to succeed in creating, selling, producing, and keeping accounts. It is also one of the chief resources of an effective freelancer. Getting in doors, proving yourself, selling your work, and getting paid is considerably more challenging as an independent contractor than as a full-time employee.

Many people in the industry will try to steer you away from freelancing, and their main concern is very valid: the difficulty of keeping your portfolio fresh. It’s tough enough getting new work produced even when you’re a staff creative, and the opportunities are even fewer for a freelancer. But it can be done (and it does have its advantages: as a freelancer you’re in a good position to land assignments that full-time staffers haven’t been able to crack.) While it’s certainly challenging to be a freelancer, you can get work produced, keep your portfolio fresh, and even win awards.

Over the years, I’ve been approached by some very talented creatives asking what I considered to be surprisingly basic questions about freelancing—seeking information I thought most everyone already had. Even though some of these creatives had freelanced in the past, they were still unclear on how to navigate the current freelancing business. So I would find myself answering the same questions over and over again—and that’s why I decided to write this book.

I hope *Minds for Rent* helps all creatives who are just getting into the business, as well as those already in the business, to get a fair shot at developing careers outside the traditional advertising-staff-job role. Freelancing is a strong, viable career option, and it can be both creatively and monetarily rewarding.

I consider all of the information contained herein to be true, based on my nine-year personal experience as a freelance advertising creative. That said, *Minds for Rent* was written as an overall guide, not an absolute rule book. Some elements are very general; some are very specific. Some strategies may work for you; some may not. Some may work in a different way for you than for others. Some will be more relevant to senior creatives, while others will apply more to junior creatives. In any event, I hope you’ll find something in my own experiences that are beneficial to you, and that *Minds for Rent* will help you attain success in your career



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## Chapter 1

### Welcome to freelancing?

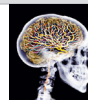
If you're reading this book, you're either curious about freelancing as an advertising creative, or are already doing it but want to know more. In either case, there are a number of ways to proceed, because freelancing as an advertising creative can mean different things. One can freelance on the side while holding a full-time job. One can “permalance”—freelance on-site at one shop, full-time, over an extended period. One can freelance a variety of jobs, at many different agencies at one time. Or, one can simply perform one freelance job at a time.

There are many reasons why creatives choose freelancing: to break the monotony of life as a full-time staffer, to seek independence, to start their own business, or to search for a balance between career and personal life. (This last motivating factor was what started me on my own course.)

If you're a staff creative considering a freelance career, there are a number of important questions to ask yourself before you quit that staff job:

- Are you independent and motivated enough to be your own sales rep?
- Are you ready to do your own billing, as well as be your own studio, media, art-buying, IT, and account person?
- Are your résumé, portfolio, and bank account substantial?

Success as a freelance advertising creative depends heavily upon the breadth—and size—of one's portfolio. If you've won every major creative award in the business, but haven't managed a substantial group of clients, you may do very well selling your freelance work—but might find managing the multiple aspects of a freelance business quite daunting. If you've only been in the business a short time, you could, frankly, find it impossible to get a freelance job. Then again, you may find the challenge of producing new work, bringing in new clients, and meeting last-minute deadlines positively stimulating—and thus become successful.



## Terms / Abbreviations

Book - A portfolio of work. Traditionally print, television, radio, interactive and new media.

Booked - Final confirmation of being hired for a freelance job.

JR - Junior creative

AD - Art Director

W - Writer

ACD - Associate Creative Director (can be a writer or art director)

CD - Creative Director (can be a writer or art director)

GCD - Group Creative Director (can be a writer or art director)

ECD - Executive Creative Director (can be a writer or art director)

HR - Human Resources

HH - Headhunter

CR - Creative Recruiter

CS - Creative Supervisor

CM - Creative Manager

CT - Creative team consisting of a Writer and an Art Director.

On site - Working for a client at their location.

Off-site - Working for a client anywhere not at their location.

Permalence - Working at one place for an extended period of time. Generally more than 6 months.

Day rate - A price paid to do work for a day of work, regardless of hours worked.

Project fee - A price paid to do work for an entire project regardless of time.

Per-Week rate - A price paid for a five-day work week. There is no payment for worked weekends.

Retainer - A contract between two people or companies where one pays to reserve the other's time. The agreement includes the salary to be paid, the period of time to be reserved and details on the type and scope of work to be done by person or company under retainer. Often included are also specific goals, called milestones, to be accomplished within a certain period of time.

Minds for rent<sup>®</sup> - A payment or series of payments made by a lessee to an owner in return for the use of another's ideas, solutions and unique problem-solving ability.

