

The 6-Step Freelance *Playbook.*

6 steps that will save you 100+ hours. Here is
what I learned over 14+ years building a six-figure
freelance business as a solo designer.



A bit about me

I'm Faizur Rehman, a solo designer living in Prague, originally from India. I've spent 14+ years working in design at agencies, in-house teams, contract roles, and even as a Creative Director. Over the years, I've helped build products valued at more than \$500 million.

When I began freelancing, I tried platforms like Freelancer .com and Fiverr. I got **banned** from one site after several failed proposals.

Then, I started sharing design content on Instagram. That's where I landed my first client.

Over the years, I gained multiple clients from Instagram, Dribbble, and other platforms. I earned enough while working as a solo designer.

But freelancing in 2026 is very different from five years ago. I earned my first six-figure income in 2024 by focusing on specific projects. Since then, I've continued to grow my solo business.

Here are the six steps I learned. If you're starting out, this might save you years of hard work.

Position yourself

The toughest time in my career was when I said, "I'm a designer. I work on branding, apps, websites, dashboards, Shopify, landing pages, and logos." This actually did the most damage to my work. When you do everything, nobody knows what to hire you for.

Here is an example

Designer A The generalist Mobile app (\$10K), website (\$4K), logo (\$1K), branding (\$3K). Always switching context. Always stressed. Clients are confused about what they actually do. Lower output. More stress.	Designer B The specialist Only landing page design. \$2,500 per project. Three to four days each. Ten clients a month. More money, less stress, happier life. Make average \$10-25k
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I'm not saying you should "**niche down**" That's not the main point. If you have real skills in different areas, you can offer various services in many ways. For instance, you can create multiple landing pages. The point is: don't try to do everything. Focus on one problem, one niche, and one solution.

To find your position, I ask these questions every time:

- * What kind of project do you keep getting drawn to?
- * What do you enjoy working on the most (landing page, ui design or anything)?
- * What can you deliver quickly and confidently?

Be specific about **what you do**, **who it's for**, and **how it helps them**. This is positioning. When your message is clear, it's easier for the right clients to find you.

Scope is a **everything**

Most of the time, you shouldn't negotiate the price, but rather negotiate the scope. The price is what you charge, and the scope is what you have to deliver. What I've learned is that if you get the scope right, the price will take care of itself.

Ten minutes of asking scope questions
saves you ten weeks of unpaid work.

Let me give you an example.

When a client asks for \$5,000 to redesign a website, you can either accept the offer or try to negotiate. However, the challenge is that you can give them a price, but the scope is not clear yet.

You should ask questions like these:

- * How many pages are needed?
- * What is the goal?
- * Who will provide the content and images?
- * Is it a responsive design?

A unclear can leave me feeling overwhelmed, unmotivated, and stressed. It might even lead to the cancellation of the project.

I follow three rules for scope.

Rules #1

If scope is unclear, do a paid discovery call.

Rules #2

Take a day and
Break every project into
phases.

Rules #3

Never agree to
"open scope."
That means infinite work
for fixed money.

How I think about pricing

When it comes to pricing, I use two approaches, fixed project and retainer, and I hate to say I don't work on hourly base pricing anymore.

01 Fixed Project

Here's what I usually do: a client approaches me for a project, such as redesigning a website or creating an app. I provide one price for the whole job, and we agree on the scope, timeline, and payment terms upfront. If you're just starting out, this is a good approach.

02 Retainer pricing

I started offering retainers in 2025, where a client pays a fixed monthly fee for a set amount of my time. This usually goes well as the client knows and trusts me from our past work together. I don't try to sell retainers on our first call; instead, I focus on building trust with the client first.

Here is an example

Without Retainer		With Retainer	
Month 1	\$10,000	3 clients × \$8,000	\$24,000
Month 2	\$0	Monthly hour (each client)	20+ average
Month 3	\$3,000	Income	Consistence
A fixed project is like a rollercoaster. Sometimes you've projects, and sometimes you don't.		Working with 2-3 projects monthly, you can easily get consistent income.	

In my opinion, You can use project-based pricing. But for ongoing work or special design needs, a retainer is better than hourly or fixed rates.

Build systems

Early on I ran everything from the Notes app and a spreadsheet. It worked at first. The reason I couldn't grow was simple. I couldn't see how many clients had reached out, what to track, what to follow up on. Every email I wrote from scratch took 30 minutes. Three things I'd build now:

01 CRM

Build a simple CRM where you can track your clients' leads and follow up. You'll see more opportunities. You know, I used to just have a call with a client, after call, most of time I'd forget. But since I set up my CRM, everything has changed. Use whatever works for you like Notion, Airtable, or even a Google Sheet. Just stop running your business from your inbox.

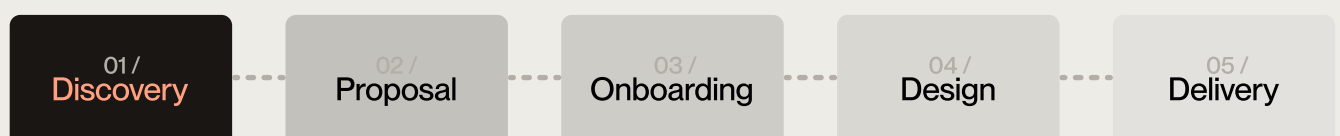
02 Templates & SOPs

If you write something more than twice, create SOPs and email templates. These should explain how you run your business. For example, if you say, "Thank you for meeting," how often have you sent this email? Make an SOP or template. Next time, just copy, paste, and update.

This simple step can save you a lot of time.

03 Build repeatable systems

To be successful, you need a systematic approach, which means writing down your own steps. It doesn't have to look a certain way - the key is to have a consistent approach.



If you're freelancing for fun, then that's okay.

How to **get clients**

This is the million-dollar question. Hundreds of designers ask it every week. and there is no magic to get clients, but I have some approaches I use.

You need understand few things

If you post your work but don't tell people what to do next, you lose the client. If a client goes to your website and your position isn't clear, you lose the client again. If they can't find the next step after seeing your work, you lose them again. These are the patterns I noticed and worked around.

Here is framework I use

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| 01 | Post your work | Share your unfinished work, progress, and approach. Most of my clients come from sharing my unfinished work. I have posted a lot of my work on Twitter and LinkedIn. |
| 02 | Add detailed caption | Add solid caption in every post.
Explain the problem, the decisions, and the result. |
| 03 | Add a CTA | End each post with a next step. "Need design help? faizur.com "
If you don't guide them, they won't move forward. |
| 04 | Use a form, not email | Use a form on your site instead of email.
I use a form to filter clients and understand projects. |
| 05 | Use a CRM | Every lead form comes into my Notion CRM, which is how I track everything. |

I also get a lot of work from referrals. For me, delivering quality work is more important than money. I charge based on my value. And yes, you can post a lot of work, but you need to give clear direction. What do you want clients to do next?

Think freelance as **business**

The day I stopped treating freelancing like a side hustle, everything changed.
Here is my advice based on what works for me

*** Terms are your best friend:**

Adding details to my proposals (scope, rules, what's included, payment terms) made clients stop arguing. A real proposal protects both sides. Mine has clear do's and don'ts. It looks long. It saves me weeks of revisions.

*** Raise your price after every project:**

First rule: never work for less than \$X per hour

Second rule: each new client pays more than the last.

*** Treat yourself like an employee:**

When nobody was hiring me, I hired myself. I showed up... even when I didn't feel like it. The freedom of freelancing isn't doing whatever you want. The freedom is choosing what you build.

*** Document your process:**

For me, when a system is in place, everything is easier for me.

From getting the first lead to onboarding the client and starting work, it only takes about 20 to 30 minutes.

Your path to success

Checklist

- Define your position
- Build your system: Templates & SOPs
- Before you agree to open scope, take time to understand and ask questions, even if it means having a long meeting call with the client.
- Define your pricing strategy.
- Create proper funnel (work, caption and cta)
- Run it like a business Set hours. Show up daily. Stop treating it like a hobby.

What's Next?



There are 2 ways I can help you

* [Read my newsletters](#)

Every week I share what's working in my freelance business. Pricing, clients, mistakes, mindset. 5,000+ designers read it.

* [The Notion CRM OS](#)

My complete freelance business system. The exact setup I used to go from a \$500/month employee to a six-figure solo business. Track leads, clients, projects, and revenue in one place.