



JPG & Associates, Inc



# Have You Considered Freelance?

*JPG & Associates, Inc.*

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*[jpgassoc.com](http://jpgassoc.com)*





## About JPG & Associates, Inc.

- Full-service technical communication firm providing:
  - Staffing options for providing technical communication resources.
  - Consulting services to support tech. comm. projects.

Over the past 27 years, JPG has served more than 175 companies and completed more than 5,000 projects, along with filling hundreds of requisitions.





## Background of Jerry Grohovsky

- University of Minnesota- BA in Journalism.
- News editorial openings scarce.
- Explored the technical writing profession as an alternative.
- Enrolled in technical writing course at the U of M.
- Upon graduation: Began working as technical writer trainee for local manufacturer in mid 1970s.
- Staff writer for next 19 years at several large and small companies.
- In the mid 1980s, started freelancing evenings and weekends—while employed full-time at 3M company.
- After four years as a technical writing contractor at 3M, left the company in 1993 and co-founded JPG with spouse (3M was our first client, and only client).







## Many Types Of Professional Opportunities

- Internships—paid and unpaid.
- Volunteer—aka: pro-bono (i.e., private sector).
- Direct hire employee—full-time or part-time.
- Temp-to-hire—aka: contract-to-hire.
- Independent consultant or contractor--full-time, part-time, or project-by-project.
- Freelance opportunities—generally refers to providing communication services on a “project-by-project” basis, as a “self-employed” professional (often on an intermittent, part-time, or as-needed basis, while working full-time as a direct employee for your primary employer.)





## Definition Of Freelance

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

- **freelance**
- *adjective* free·lance
- **Simple Definition of *freelance***
- : earning money by being hired to work on different jobs for short periods of time rather than by having a permanent job with one employer; *also* : done or produced by a freelance worker
- **Full Definition of *freelance***
- *1 a* : of, relating to, or being a freelance : [independent](#) <a freelance writer>*b* : done by a freelance <freelance reviewing>





## Freelance Means Working Solo

In the communications profession, *freelance* refers to providing communication services on a *project-by-project* basis, as a *self-employed* professional (most often, without going through an agency).

A person who engages in freelance work is commonly referred to a *freelancer*.

Working freelance conjures personas of freedom, being your own boss, taking on the roll of troubleshooter—or borrowing from an old western TV show: *Have Writer Will Travel*.







## Freelance Versus Independent Contractor

It may be argued that freelance and independent consultant are interchangeable.

However, there are those who view *independent consultant* as more of a fulltime, established senior role, and *freelance* as a more intermittent, part-time role performed off-hours in conjunction with a full-time job.

I don't  
work here,  
I'm a  
consultant



## Benefits Of Freelancing

- Good part-time income.
- Great way to accumulate a wide variety of experience.
- Sharpens your skills.
- Helps in getting your name out in the professional network.







## Why Do Companies Like Freelancers?

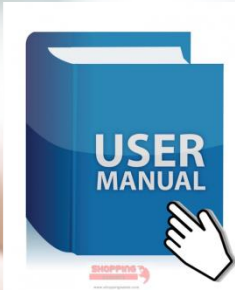
Because freelancers are hired directly by a company (or client) to perform a specific task or complete a special project for which the client may:

- Need a special skill set not available internally.
- Be without the resources internally to complete the project.
- Need to outsource due to a spike in activity.
- Eliminates the hassle of hiring direct.





## Most Common Freelance Projects



- **Technical documents**—user manuals, help systems, general standard operating procedures (SOPs), web-based content, specific technical documents related to specific industries—such for FDA, European Standards, OSHA.

- **Marketing communications deliverables**—newsletter and magazine articles, case histories, trade journal articles, white papers, feature-benefit brochures, web content for corporate website.



- **Training**—classroom, web-based self-study (e-learning), webinars, PP presentations.
- **Graphic-specific**—page layout and design, template design, technical illustrations, infographics, logo and icon design, 3D animation.



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## Project Opportunities Are Limitless...

- ⊙ Hardware documentation
- ⊙ Software documentation
- ⊙ Operator's guides
- ⊙ Troubleshooting guides
- ⊙ Maintenance manuals
- ⊙ Installation manuals
- ⊙ Paper-based
- ⊙ On-line
- ⊙ Web-based
- ⊙ On-line help (local)
- ⊙ Web-based help
- ⊙ Remove-and-replace procedures
- ⊙ End-user (external) documentation
- ⊙ Internal documentation
- ⊙ Field service notes
- ⊙ Installation notes
- ⊙ Test plans
- ⊙ Test procedures
- ⊙ Proposals
- ⊙ Newsletters
- ⊙ Reports
- ⊙ Manufacturing procedures
- ⊙ Process documentation
- ⊙ White papers
- ⊙ Trade journal articles
- ⊙ Quick reference cards or guides
- ⊙ Help desk tip sheets
- ⊙ Functional specifications
- ⊙ Product descriptions
- ⊙ Feature/benefits marketing sheets
- ⊙ Technical brochures
- ⊙ Interactive technical manuals
- ⊙ Equipment technical manuals
- ⊙ Video scripts
- ⊙ IFUs for medical devices
- ⊙ Templates for formatting
- ⊙ Research studies
- ⊙ Style guides
- ⊙ Medical device labeling
- ⊙ Quality assurance documentation
- ⊙ Training documentation
- ⊙ Classroom training
- ⊙ E-learning training
- ⊙ Compliance documentation
- ⊙ Sarbanes-Oxley compliance
- ⊙ Motivational
- ⊙ ISO
- ⊙ FDA clinical trials documentation
- ⊙ Intended-for-use statements
- ⊙ Compliance documentation
- ⊙ Procedural
- ⊙ Descriptive
- ⊙ Persuasive
- ⊙ Standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- ⊙ Step-by-step
- ⊙ Policies and procedures
- ⊙ Disaster recovery documentation
- ⊙ Military spec.
- ⊙ Parts lists
- ⊙ Change management documentation
- ⊙ Knowledge management documentation
- ⊙ Software development/life-cycle documentation
- ⊙ Business process requirements
- ⊙ Software/system requirements
- ⊙ Design documents
- ⊙ Workflow documentation
- ⊙ Presentations
- ⊙ Network infrastructure doc.
- ⊙ Cloud-based documentation
- ⊙ Wiki authoring
- ⊙ Mobile device delivery





## Common Skill Sets In Demand



- Content development for a variety of audiences, objectives, and delivery methods.
- Technical writing and editing.
- Marketing communication writing.
- Graphic design, illustrating, photography.
- Instructional design development
- E-learning development.
- Translation coordination.
- Usability testing.
- User-experience (UX), user-interface (UI).





## Companies That Use Freelancers

- ◉ Corporate startups.
- ◉ Small, medium size established corps.
- ◉ Rapidly growing companies.
- ◉ Fortune 500 (less common).
- ◉ Creative and marketing firms.
- ◉ Employment agencies.
- ◉ Entrepreneurs.
- ◉ Various project bidding and RFP sites for writers, graphic designers, and other communication professionals.





## Industries That Provide Project Opportunities

- Medical device.\*
- Bio-tech.
- Healthcare.
- Banking and finance.
- Engineering.
- Software development.
- High-technology.
- Industrial and consumer products.
- Manufacturing.
- Web-based software and commerce.



\*Note: Minnesota is near the top of the list for number of medical device companies.





## Where Opportunities Will Continue To Expand

- Medical device and bio-tech.
- Enterprise software (IT).
- Web-based commerce.
- Quality assurance departments.
- Manufacturing processes.
- Internal policies and procedures.
- Compliances (i.e., FDA, ISO, Sarbanes Oxley, global import standards).
- Training (i.e., employee, sales, customer, distributor).
- Global markets (i.e., compliance, translations, training).





## Corporate Groups Who Hire Freelancers

- Technical publications, global translation.
- Marketing communications.
- Training.
- Engineering.
- Manufacturing.
- Software development.
- Customer service.
- IT, systems administration, enterprise software.
- Quality assurance (control).
- Compliance monitoring and enforcement.
- Human resources (HR).





## Professional Skills & Strengths That Prepare You

- Any kind of writing you pursue on the side (volunteer or paid) that allows you to keep your skills sharpened.
- Ability to work independently.
- Receptivity to working occasional late night to complete deadlines.
- Retain strong project management skills.
- When necessary, coordinate several projects simultaneously.
- Be able to assess, quote, plan, and deliver.
- Strong verbal communications skills.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Negotiation skills.
- Be able to be flexible and compromising when necessary.
- Ability to stand firm for your convictions when necessary, but concede to client when prudent to do so.

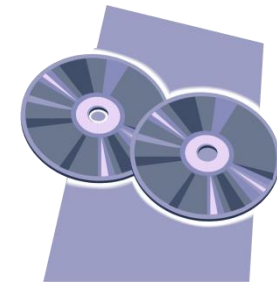






## Software Tools That Are Good To Know

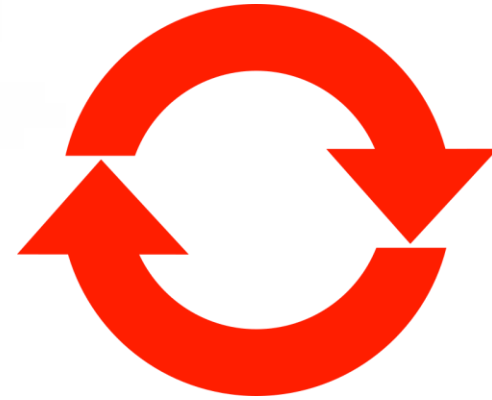
- Knowledge of software tools have become a very important skill for today's freelancer.
- Long-standing traditional tools still matter:
  - MS Office®
  - Adobe InDesign®
  - Adobe FrameMaker®
  - Adobe Acrobat®
  - Adobe PhotoShop®
  - Adobe Illustrator®
  - Adobe RoboHelp®
- Other newer tools for technical writing and training development:
  - Adobe Presenter®, Adobe Captivate®, Camtasia Studio®, Articulate Studio®, XML (markup languages for content management), Madcap Flare®, and so on.





## To Be Successful, You Must Rotate These Steps

- 1. Market your skills.
  - 2. Submit quotations.
  - 3. Plan your project.
  - 4. Fulfill your objective.
  - 5. Submit invoice(s).
- Repeat cycle 1-5 with each new project.





## Methods Used To Engage Freelancers

- By quotation—aka: RFP (*Request For Proposal*), where the client requests an estimate of project cost.
- Hourly—aka: *Hourly pay rate, bill rate*, where the client requests project assistance on a fixed hourly rate of \$x/hour (or time and material basis).







## Practices That Help You Be Successful

- Knowing what project is a good fit for you, and what isn't—you will learn to turn down projects.
- On the flip-side of the above statement: don't necessarily turn down a project that you have never done before (weigh the risk against the gain, for the gain may open up many more doors for you).
- Be extremely communicative.
- Be quick to respond.
- Be disciplined with your time.
- Be thorough.
- Be ethical.
- Be honest and up-front.





## Thing You Didn't Know You Would Have To Do

Sometimes you may have to:

- Compromise on cost.
- Modify your schedule to fit a deadline change.
- Take on the roll of an instructor in helping your client to make the right decision(s) for a project.
- Real in (or bring back to reality) a client who thinks he or she knows a lot about communications—but really doesn't.
- Recognize when a client is adding to much effort to a project for the time frame given—and then communicate a pause or stop. Then discuss.





## Expectations Of The Client

- Looking for good value for their \$dollars\$.
- Minimal guidance.
- Seeing you as the expert.
- You will be the answer to his problem.







## What To Do Next?

- 1. Talk to peers, colleagues, and friends who are freelancers or have done freelance work.
- 2. Set up a home office.
- 3. Choose a name.
- 4. Make business cards and invoices.
- 5. Establish an on-line portfolio.
- 6. Consult with your tax attorney regarding tax with-holdings (especially if you will be doing a lot of freelance work)—setting monies aside for taxes is prudent.





## Common Challenges Of Freelance

- Deciding how to price yourself.
- Quoting projects without being too high or too low.
- Committing to deadlines that are achievable.
- Knowing what to accept, and what to decline.
- Being careful not to over extend yourself that encroaches on your either your person life or your day job.





## Full-Time Versus Part-Time

- Starting out part-time is always best—particularly if you are a new graduate or have never done any projects solo.
- Fulltime is only recommended after having gained a substantial amount of experience on a part-time basis.
- NOTE: It is strongly recommended that if you are a new graduate, that you experiment with freelance while employed full-time so as to gain experience in a setting with mentors and an environment with infrastructure.







## Be Patient, Do Some Projects, And Learn...

- Starting out, it is difficult to know enough to make any decisions freelancing as a full-time career choice, or what your specialty will be.
- You must “test the waters” first.
- Observe, research, read, and listen.
- By going through the exercises of several projects, you will gain invaluable experience that will bring you closer to making additional decisions, and make you a better freelancer.
- And remember, there is no better teacher than doing projects, learning what works, and what doesn't work.





## You May Ask: How Do I Market Myself?

- Networking at professional organization meetings, after-hours business-to business networking events.
- Attend job fairs where you can meet face-to-face with corporate representatives.
- Browse the job postings for companies or project stakeholders who are looking for contractors (if they are, then they may also need freelancers).
- Cold calling still works (although more challenging today).
- User LinkedIn to keep on the lookout for individuals of interest—you may be linked to someone who can introduce you for an inquiry.
- Always carry extra business cards.





## Opportunities Will Be Heating Up Because...

- Demographics: Boomers will be retiring in the next 10-15 years.
- More demands for documentation in healthcare and medical device.
- Increasing demand in bio-tech.
- Increasing variety of deliverables (i.e., tablets, notebooks, smart phones cloud storage, file sharing, etc.).
- Increasing use of new technologies and tools (i.e., translation software, content management, web-based software, etc.).
- Training development (instructional design and e-learning) will continue to be in demand.







## Profiles That Catch The Hiring Manager's Attention

- 4-year degree in Tech Comm., English, Journalism; some requests call for an advanced degree.
- Internships, projects, or related job experience while in school are very helpful.
- Solid writing ability.
- Good verbal skills.
- Quick study (learning about client products).
- A creative problem solver (can adjust to changing landscape).
- Basic software tools familiarity.
- Works well with people, departments, and stakeholders.





## Use The Tools Of Effective Search

- Resume.
- Create a portfolio of samples (may also include samples on-line).
- Join LinkedIn and create a profile page.
- Watch the on-line posting sites.
- Post resume on reputable sites.
- Person-to-person networking is still important.
- Work with agencies that specialize.





## Communication Is Important

- Have all vital contact information on resume.
- Check e-mail and voice mail on a regular basis.
- Return e-mail inquiries and missed phone calls promptly—sometimes a day or even hours can make the difference.
- Be proactive and check in with your contacts or agencies periodically—shows interest, energy, and professionalism.







## Organizations And Memberships

- Society for Technical Communication (STC)
  - [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)
- American Medical Writers Association (AMWA)
  - [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)
- LinkedIn specialty groups
- Networking groups, training, seminars, expositions, etc.