

SAMPLE



THE **HUMAN'S GUIDE** TO



**FREELANCE
LIVING**

Charlie Pabst

The Human's Guide to Freelance Living

By Charlie Pabst

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Someone once stole this book.

Yeah, this one guy downloaded it off my site, rewrote a few words here and there, then hastily forgot from where he'd stolen it. Weeks later he gets in touch with me and says, "Hey, please design my amazing new manuscript!" I open it up and there's this very book, my own words staring back at me. Long story short, he was embarrassed.

But having to steal stuff *is* sort of embarrassing isn't it? When you really think about it.

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Introduction and Who I Am

IN TRADITIONAL TERMS, I may very well be the person least qualified to write a book about business. Probably should get that out of the way right off the bat.

Let me astonish you with my non-credentials:

As far as I know (I don't keep a good eye on it) I've never had more than about 400 Twitter followers. I post to my blogs about once or twice a year. I don't podcast or videocast, nor do I advertise. My dusty, cobwebbed mailing list (where they say the money is at) collected hundreds and hundreds of names before I'd sent out a single broadcast.

From all that, it probably sounds like my true calling is curling up with a bag of potato chips and watching late-night infomercials until I cry myself to sleep. The reality though is that none of those "Super

Important Internet Metrics” have stopped my business from rapidly growing.

After ten years in architecture/engineering, I switched gears entirely and started a graphic design and consulting business from scratch. Architecture to graphic design is an odd switch, but I figured I was perfectly qualified. After all, logos are basically the same thing as architecture. Plus I owned Photoshop. What could possibly go wrong?

Since then my business has made over a half-million dollars. I have worked with, talked to, and emailed everybody on the internet in some fashion or another. (Yes, that’s an exaggeration. There’s one guy in Rajasthan I’ve yet to get hold of.)

None of this is bragging rights. I report my numbers and minor successes only to show *one* thing: that a fairly quiet, introspective, somewhat invisible, and apparently (but not at all) misanthropic guy can still make it at this crazy thing called business.

How? This book is the answer to that question.

The first edition of this book, published before my business had really even emerged, is almost singlehandedly responsible for everything that has happened since. Every client I’ve had, every dollar I’ve made, and pretty much every email I’ve sent has been fueled by the things you’ll read herein.

Aside from being an ongoing mission statement, this book brought in tens of thousands of dollars in actual work the year it was first published.

Now, this isn’t your typical business book. I’m not going to regurgitate tips on hacking social media, running ad campaigns, or A/B testing your

landing pages. Nor will I insist that you “be everywhere,” which would be hypocritical coming from the guy who is quite often nowhere at all. There are no palm tree dreams waiting for you in these pages. (The cover is a joke by the way, a play on the luxurious promises of the internet elite. Plus I felt like drawing palm trees.)

What’s intended here is more of a slap in the face. Not a mean one, but a caring, loving, tender, philosophical slap. Right on the eyeball.

I’ve called this the “Human’s Guide” because that’s exactly what it is. You don’t need to be a CEO to succeed. You don’t need a suit and tie. You don’t need a Harvard tongue or to hang out in smokey cigar lounges discussing the gilded font on your business cards.

You just need to be human. You just need to really care about what you create, how you present it, and how you treat those around you.

If you’re the type that doesn’t thank waitresses or leave them tips, you will hate this book and it will likely go entirely over your head.

If you’re looking for a fast way to riches, do yourself a favor throw this book in the fireplace. If you’re reading on a Kindle, maybe put your Kindle in the fireplace instead.

Get ready for some philosophy mixed with street smarts; sailor’s language tempered with poetry; magic built with real-world blueprints; romanticism imbued with a whole lot of forgotten common sense.

I can’t promise you a smooth ride, but neither is freelancing smooth. Sometimes you have to use a large hammer to pound square pegs into round holes.

Now, grab a hammer and let’s get rolling.



The Day I Grew Up

WE LIVE IN A WORLD NOW where every child gets a winner's blue ribbon, just for showing up. When I was in elementary school things were not this way.

The annual Track and Field day at Evergreen Elementary in Spokane was every student's favorite. We'd take the afternoon off, run around on the field in the sun with our friends, and try our best to earn some coveted blue ribbons.

Of all the events, the Fifty-Yard Dash was *the* event to win. It didn't matter what else you did in school throughout the year: pick your nose and eat it, crap your pants, throw up on a girl...if you won the Fifty all would be forgiven. Be you a nerd/geek/dork/four-eyes/loser/spaz, that was your ticket to instant popularity. Being most things on that list, I desperately needed the victory.

You know that nightmare we all sometimes have? Where you're running away from the bad guy but you aren't actually moving...like your feet are stuck in concrete? That's my sprinting technique, developed and patented in elementary school.

What my classmates could run in a dozen or so seconds would take me what felt like agonizing hours. There I'd be in very last place, just like last year, with a huge wrenching sob making its way up my throat and cutting off my air supply.

And every year I'd convince myself that if I could just push a *little* harder, run a *tiny* bit faster, I'd at least be able to pass that one super fat kid.

So I'd dig deeper, even to the point of running while clenching my butthole because why wouldn't that help?

But it doesn't help. What it does is make running properly very difficult and makes your legs seize up.

Must have been quite a sight for the spectators. A scrubby kid with a mess of blonde hair and gigantic glasses, sobbing while trying to run at top speed, hips jutting forward as he puckered up.

The long jump had similar results. Oddly it was during the long jump that I found I was suddenly able to run again, but now could no longer jump. Might as well have competed wearing an old deep-sea diving suit.

I'd land in the sand after jumping and the official would squint down at the measuring tape. Wide-eyed, I'd stare up at him and wait for the horrifying results.

"Two and a half centimeters!"

I never ever won anything and I would always cry. One year I cried so hard I peed my pants in the middle of a long-distance race. The Eighty-Billion Meter Relay if memory serves.

In sixth grade, the last year before Junior High and the final Track and Field day I'd ever compete in, I got a blue ribbon.

No, this is not a surprise happy ending.

I didn't *win* a blue ribbon. It was *handed* to me, along with a pat on the back from a teacher who felt sorry for me. Because of the urinating and crying and such.

For about two milliseconds I loved that ribbon. It was shiny blue and had *WINNER* stamped on it in twinkling gold. In the early summer sun the effect was hypnotizing.

"Wh-whu-why?" I managed to ask the teacher through my sobs.

"You tried so hard. You should be proud," the teacher said.

Stupid-ass teacher.

I already *was* proud. Sad, embarrassed, and a bit soggy, but proud. Hell, I woke up that morning knowing the embarrassment I was in for but I still showed up.

And let's face it. If you spend a whole afternoon crying and soiling yourself in front of the entire school, all of your friends and their parents, and *still* stick around for the awards ceremony? That's goddamn legendary.

But I knew a first-place ribbon didn't belong in my hands. Not the kid who couldn't even finish a race because he had run mostly in the wrong direction.

So I dropped my pity-prize blue ribbon on the field and left it there because it was worthless to me.

Worse than worthless actually. It was degrading.

So I went home empty handed again. With nothing to show for my efforts but coke-bottle glasses caked with the salt of dried tears.

Flash forward to my college years. When I was about twenty-two I participated in an all-school martial arts tournament in Portland, Oregon. If you've seen Karate Kid, you know the kind.

Because of the way the categories worked, I would be fighting opponents not only in my own belt class but the ranks immediately above and below as well.

And man I worked for it. For about six months prior, I arrived early and stayed late for every class, asked more questions, stopped sparring with my friends and instead started sparring with guys who destroyed me over and over. I stretched more, ate better, trained and fought through a dislocated rib, shadow boxed in my apartment, took the stairs instead of the elevator, perfected everything I could possibly think to perfect. I was a machine. Yeah, a machine that cried from time to time, but so what?

The week prior to the fights I was already having doubts and regretting signing up. On fight day that doubt turned to bone-deep fright. I wanted so much to fabricate a lie that would hold up under the scrutiny of my peers and coaches: "I've been called to serve in Vietnam," or "The plague is back and I've caught it."

But you can't lie yourself out of fear because you wind up lying yourself right into shame instead.

So I sacked up, cursing my own idiotic integrity.

I was scared, near vomiting, and couldn't eat. When I arrived to the tournament and checked in, I was already exhausted and drained from jangled nerves.

And it seemed the plague *had* come back after all, as most of the lower-ranked guys had suspiciously called in sick with it. So it would be me versus a bunch of other guys with a year or two more experience. I was doomed.

I took my seat mat-side and waited for the main attraction to commence: The Charlie Gets Mortally Injured In Front Of A Large Audience Show.

When the referee called my name for the first fight I stood up and took my position. I bowed to the ref, my opponent, then got into stance.

As I waited for the ref to wave us into action I looked my opponent over. He was ranked a belt above me and looked furious, sneering and showing his mouthpiece. I believe he was also chewing on rusty nails. That's against the rules but I'd soon be dead anyway so what's a little tetanus.

In my head I tried to fashion some way to purposely get beat, without it being totally obvious that's what I was doing. If I lost the fight, I could just go home.

But then something happened.

I got offended.

Not at him. At *myself*. For feeling I had no right to be there. For not standing up for myself. For letting myself be bullied by my own familiar feelings of smallness. For telling myself I'd lose before the tournament even got started.

The subject of ethics can be a tough one sometimes, but that day I got a pretty meaningful lesson. I discovered that ethics has something to do with how low you'll let yourself sink.

That day I found the bottom.

As this paradigm shift happened in my universe, my opponent and I were waved into action. Fight scenes never come across well in writing, so I'll just tell you that the rest of the night rolled along in slow motion. Each of my opponents apparently fighting through thick syrup and heavy shackles while I floated like a butterfly.

I won that tournament. In fact I won with such a lead that I went home feeling a pang of shame, like I'd used a howitzer to mug a ninety-year-old woman.

Looking back on that tournament now, you know what my favorite part is?

Not the victory.

It's that I showed up.

I'd come face to face with the infamous Resistance and kicked it square in the naughty bits. And what I received in return was the infinity of feeling alive. Gaining experience. Learning that I wouldn't have to worry about feeling ashamed of myself again, because I simply wouldn't allow it.

Win, lose, or draw, you gotta show up. Just like Track and Field day. Just like your job. Just like the scary interview. Just like the day you turn in your two-week notice at work.

That's when the magic starts: upon your arrival.

Like what you've read so far? Excellent!

GET THE BOOK!

