



How Freelancers Get the Clients they Deserve

Results of the 2016 Marketing Survey



Introduction

How Freelancers Get the Clients they Deserve: 2016 Marketing Survey, fielded from February 22, 2016 to April 10, 2016, asked freelancers about the challenges they face in marketing their businesses, what works best for them, what they'd like to learn about, and more.

Much thanks to the 267 freelancers who took the survey,¹ recruited through:

- Professional associations:
 - American Medical Writers Association
 - American Society of Journalists and Authors
 - Editorial Freelancers Association
 - National Association of Independent Writers and Editors
- Freelance Success, an online community of professional, nonfiction writers
- Freelancers Union, an online community for all types of freelancers that promotes the interests of freelancers through advocacy, education, and services
- LinkedIn groups for freelancers and with members who are freelancers
- The Mighty Marketer email list.

Key survey findings start on the next page, followed by results for each question.

Yes, You Can Get the Clients You Deserve

Getting clients who pay you well, treat you right, and hire you again and again isn't hard once you know what works best and can market your business without wasting your time, effort, and money. With the right knowledge and a commitment to marketing, every freelancer can become a Mighty Marketer — and get great clients.

Lori De Milto

Acknowledgement: Much thanks to freelance medical writer Jennifer Minarcik, MS, for her help in developing the survey and this report.

¹ Not all freelancers answered every question so some results do not add up to 267.

Key Findings

Marketing is the “biggest challenge” or “one of the major challenges” for:

- **72% of freelancers**

For another 23% of freelancers, marketing is “somewhat of a challenge” or a “minor challenge.”

“Getting clients” is the biggest marketing challenge for:

- **45% of freelancers.**

Other top marketing challenges are:

- “Finding time for marketing”: 25% of freelancers.
- “Getting motivated to market”: 18% of freelancers.

Word of mouth (including referrals) is by far the best marketing tool for freelancers:

- **90% of freelancers said it’s “very important” or “important.”**

Other top marketing tools (ranked “very important” or “important”) are:

- Networking through professional associations: 63% of freelancers
- LinkedIn: 62% of freelancers
- Websites (of freelancers): 60% of freelancers.

Continued

Key Findings (Continued)

Professional associations are “very important” or “important” in getting new clients for 64% of freelancers.

LinkedIn is the most important social network for freelancers in getting new clients:

- **69% of freelancers said LinkedIn is “very important” or “important.”**

Facebook and Twitter tied for the second most important social network, each ranked “very important” or “important” by 19% of freelancers.

The top marketing topic freelancers want to learn more about, ranked #1 by 36% of freelancers, is websites.

Other #1 topics are:

1. Networking through professional associations (33% of freelancers)
2. LinkedIn (31% of freelancers).

The top 3 topics freelancers want to learn about (ranked #1, #2, or #3), are:

1. Networking through professional associations (88% of freelancers)
2. Website (86% of freelancers)
3. LinkedIn (86% of freelancers).

Survey Participants

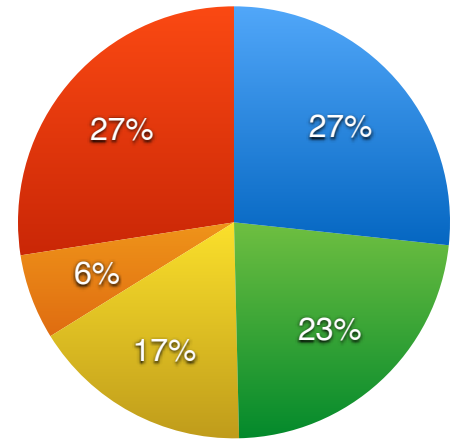
Years of Freelance Experience

Survey respondents are a mix of new and seasoned freelancers. The two largest groups of respondents are the most experienced (10+ years) freelancers and the least experienced freelancers (less than 1 year).

The Numbers*

Less than 1 year	71
1-3 years	62
4-6 years	44
7-9 years	17
10+ years	73

* 267 responses



- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10+ years

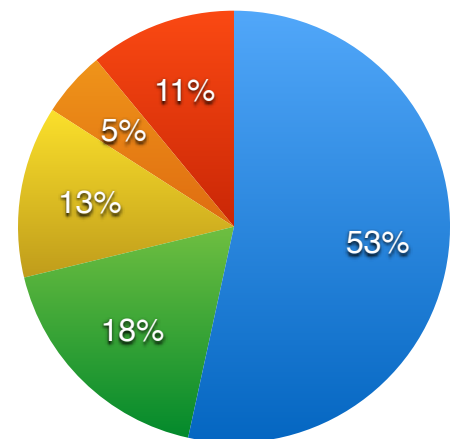
Types of Freelancers

The largest groups of freelancers are writers, editors, and writers who are also editors or work in another field. Creative professionals (web designers, graphic designers, other designers/artists, and photographers) are the next largest group. Nearly 11% of the freelancers work in other freelance fields, such as IT, translators, marketing coaches/consultants, and virtual assistants.

The Numbers*

Writers	143
Editors	47
Writers + other	34
Creative professionals	13
Other	29

* 266 responses



- Writers
- Editors
- Writers + other
- Creative Professionals
- Other

Types of writers + other and creative professionals are:

Writers + other:

- Writers + editors 24
- Writers + other 10

Creative professionals:

- Web designers 4
- Graphic designers 4
- Other designers/artists 3
- Photographers 2

Under other freelance fields, IT professionals is the only other group with more than 4 freelancers:

- Web developers 5
- Other IT professionals 4

Marketing and Other Freelance Challenges

Of all of the challenges in freelancing, marketing is the “biggest challenge” or “one of the major challenges” for most — 72% of — freelancers*:

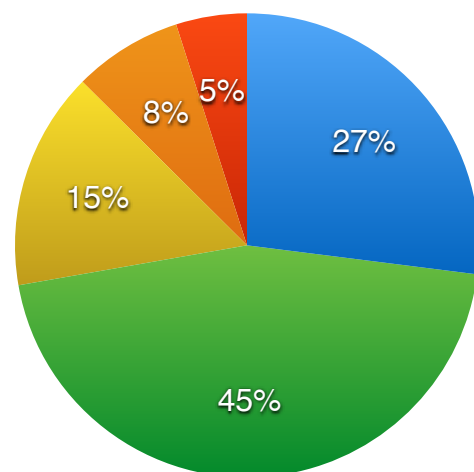
- “Biggest challenge”:
 - 71 freelancers
- “One of the major challenges”:
 - 119 freelancers.

For 23% of freelancers, marketing is “somewhat of a challenge” or a “minor challenge”:

- “Somewhat of a challenge”:
 - 40 freelancers
- “Minor challenge”:
 - 20 freelancers.

Only 5% of freelancers (13 freelancers) said that marketing is “not a challenge.”

* 263 responses



- Biggest challenge
- Major challenge
- Somewhat of challenge
- Minor challenge
- Not a challenge

Biggest Marketing Challenge

“Getting clients” is the biggest marketing challenge for 45% of freelancers (114 freelancers).*

“Finding time for marketing” is the biggest marketing challenge for 25% of freelancers (63 freelancers).

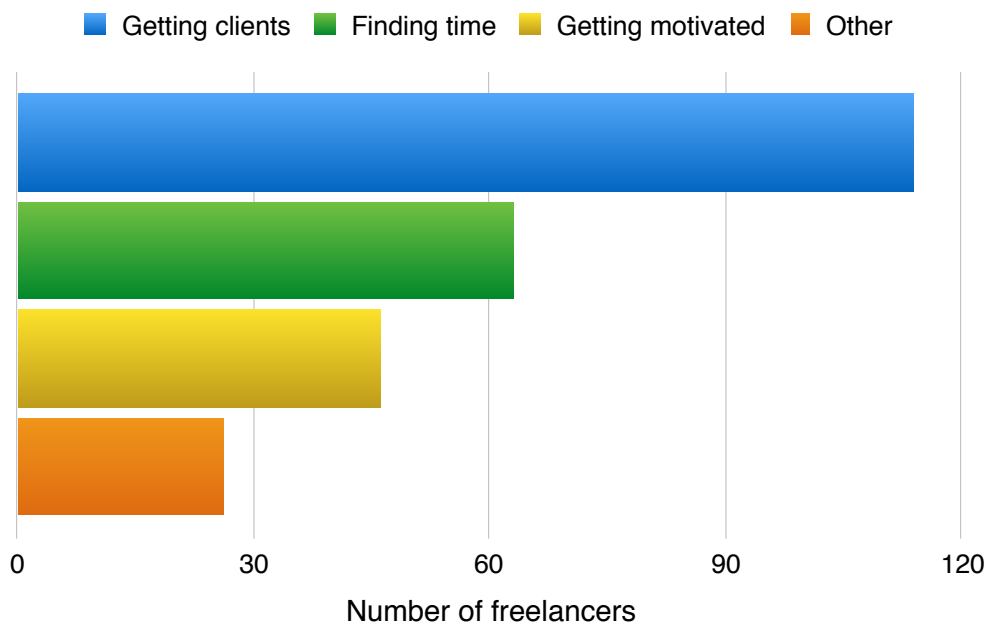
“Getting motivated to market” is the biggest marketing challenge for 18% of freelancers (46 freelancers).

11% of freelancers (28 freelancers) chose “other” as the biggest marketing challenge. The most common comments under “other” were related to:

- Finding the right or better clients (6 freelancers)
- A combination of getting clients, finding time, and/or getting motivated (3 freelancers)
- Knowing where to start (2 freelancers).

* 251 responses

All Freelancers



By Years of Freelance Experience

Getting clients is the biggest marketing challenge for many newer freelancers (less than 3 years of experience), while finding time and motivation for marketing is the biggest challenge for the most seasoned freelancers (10+ years of experience).*

	Getting Clients (Number of freelancers)	Finding Time (Number of freelancers)	Getting Motivated (Number of freelancers)
Less than 1 year	40	13	11
1-3 years	33	9	7
4-6 years	19	14	4
7-9 years	9	4	1
10+ years	13	23	23

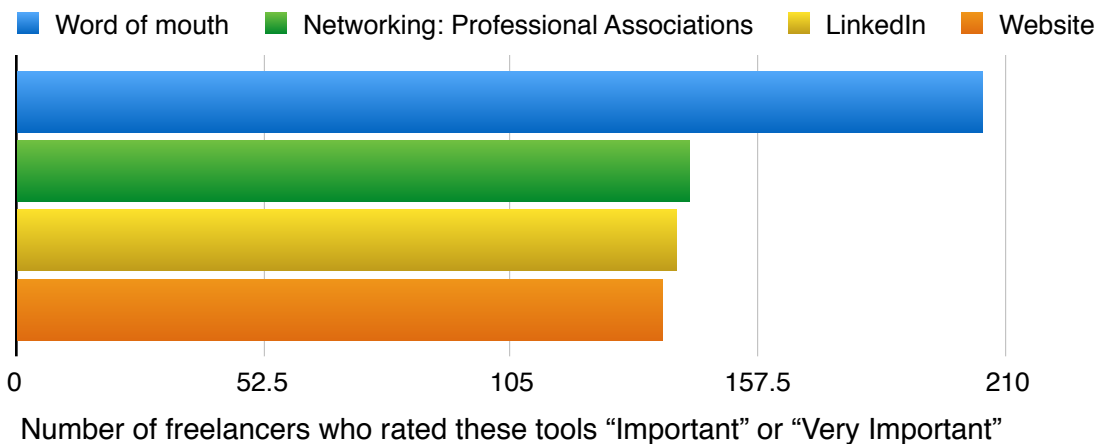
* 223 responses

Best Marketing Tools

Word of mouth (including referrals) is by far the best marketing tool for freelancers in getting new clients: 90% of freelancers said it's "very important" or "important."*

Other top marketing tools (ranked "very important" or "important") are:

- Networking through professional associations: 63% of freelancers.
- LinkedIn: 62% of freelancers
- Websites (of freelancers): 60% of freelancers.



* 219 - 229 responses per tool

Top 7 Marketing Tools

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Word of mouth	71% (163)	19% (42)	6% (14)	4% (10)
Networking*	32% (73)	31% (70)	27% (64)	10% (24)
Website	33% (74)	28% (63)	26% (60)	13% (30)
LinkedIn	27% (62)	34% (78)	30% (67)	9% (21)
Freelance directories*	18% (41)	23% (54)	33% (75)	26% (62)
Direct email or direct mail	18% (42)	22% (51)	27% (61)	33% (76)
Other networking	13% (38)	28% (62)	37% (82)	22% (49)

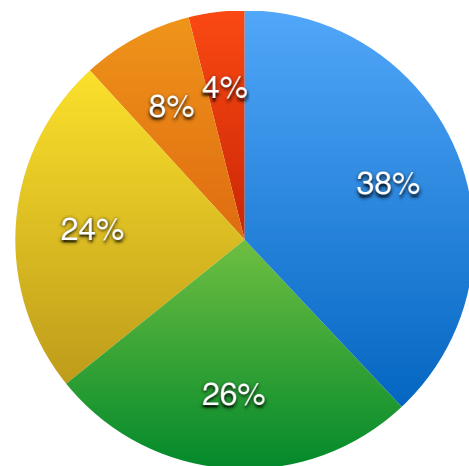
* Professional associations

Role of Professional Associations

Nearly two thirds of freelancers (64% or 147 freelancers) said that professional associations are “very important” or “important” in getting new clients.*

For another 24% of freelancers (55 freelancers), professional associations are “somewhat important.” Another 8% of freelancers (19 freelancers) said that professional associations are “not at all important.” Nine freelancers (4%) don’t belong to any professional associations.

* 230 responses



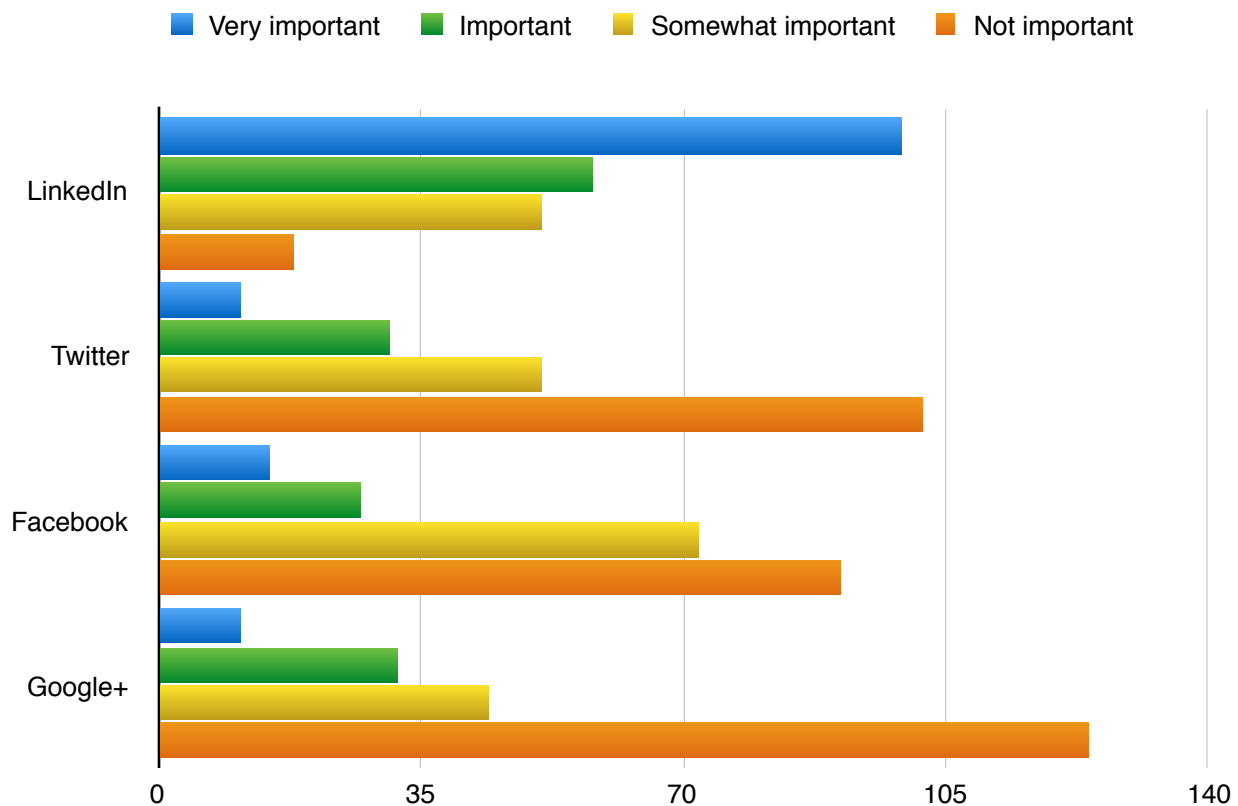
● Very important ● Important
● Somewhat important ● Not important
● Not applicable

Business Social Networks

Importance of Social Networks for Business

LinkedIn is the most important social network in getting new clients, ranked “very important” or “important” by 69% of freelancers (157 freelancers).*

Facebook and Twitter tied for the second most important social network, each ranked “very important” or “important” by 19% of freelancers (42 freelancers). Google+ was the least important social network for freelancers.



Some freelancers don't use some of these social networks:

- 32 freelancers (15%) don't use Google+
- 27 freelancers (12%) don't use Twitter
- 22 freelancers (10%) don't use Facebook
- 3 freelancers (1%) don't use LinkedIn.

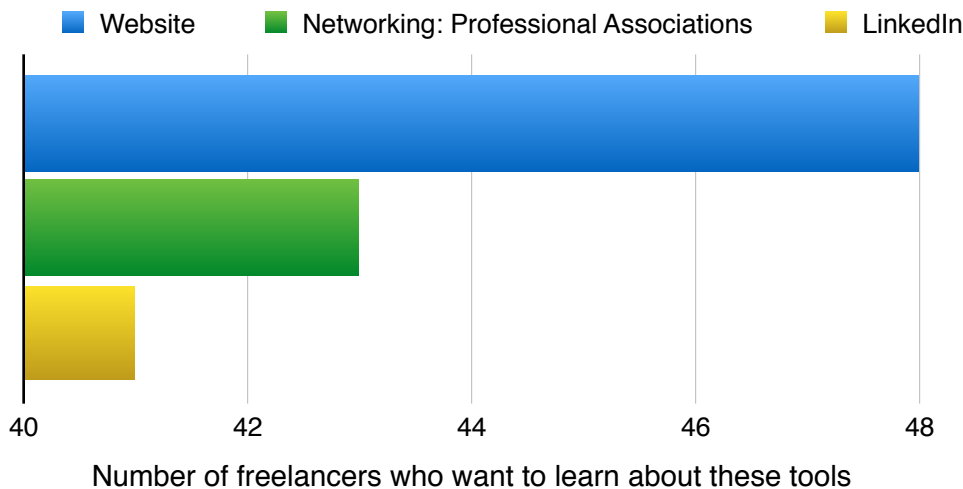
* 220-228 responses per social network

What Freelancers Want to Learn*

#1 Marketing Topic

The single marketing topic freelancers want to learn more about (ranked #1) is:

1. Website (36% of freelancers)
2. Networking through professional associations (33% of freelancers)
3. LinkedIn (31% of freelancers).



Top 3 Marketing Topics

The top 3 topics freelancers want to learn about (ranked #1, #2, or #3), are:

1. Networking through professional associations (88% of freelancers)
2. Website (86% of freelancers)
3. LinkedIn (86% of freelancers).

Other Topics Freelancers Want to Learn About

Comments from 97 freelancers about what else they'd like to learn about marketing fell into 3 broad categories:

- **What works best**, including how to be effective and efficient: 42 freelancers
- **Who to market to**, including how to find and reach the right clients: 30 freelancers
- **How to market a freelance business**, especially where to start: 25 freelancers.

* 214 responses

Get the Clients You Deserve

Get clients who pay you well and treat you right — without wasting time, effort, or money — with the Mighty Marketer’s practical, proven resources, many available for free.

“The Mighty Marketer is a mighty great tool for kicking your freelance business into high gear!”

Brian Bass, Author, “The Accidental Medical Writer,” & President, Bass Global, Inc.

“Get practical marketing advice based on Lori’s deep experience and expertise—and a boost from her energy and encouragement as you become a Mighty Marketer.”

Lisa Chontros, Freelance Writer and Translator

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“Whether you are new to the freelance world or have been working in the industry for years, The Mighty Marketer is an outstanding guide on how to expand your business.”

Brian Corchiolo, Designer

“If becoming a successful freelancer is your goal, The Mighty Marketer is an amazing resource that will instill confidence that you too can be a Mighty Marketer.”

Jennifer Minarcik, Freelance Writer

About Lori

I'm Lori De Milto, a freelancer writer, author, and entrepreneur. I've been helping clients engage, inform, and motivate their audiences since 1997. Now, I also help other freelancers get the clients they deserve through The Mighty Marketer.

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