



# How Freelancers Market Their Services: 2021 Survey **RESULTS REPORT**



# Introduction

**How Freelancers Market their Services: 2021 Survey**, fielded from October 1 to November 5, 2021, asked freelancers about what works best for them in marketing their businesses, the challenges they face, their use of social media for business, membership in professional associations, and more. Highlights of key survey findings start on page 3, followed by results for the main questions. I thank the 132 freelancers who took the survey.

## How Will the Survey Results Help You?

If you're like most freelancers, you're smart and you're talented. But you're not getting the clients you deserve. And building a stable, high-income freelance business is a struggle.

This isn't your fault.

You probably never had a chance to learn about freelance marketing.

That's where the survey results can help.

The results clearly show that some types of marketing work better than others in helping freelancers build stable, successful freelance businesses. Compare what you're doing now to what other freelancers are doing. Then set a course to improve your marketing approach, and ultimately, your results!

## Who Conducted the Survey?

I'm Lori De Milto, a freelance writer and founder of [The Mighty Marketer](#). I help freelancers get the clients they deserve by focusing on what works best, so you don't without waste time or money.

Every freelancer can become a Mighty Marketer. See the end of the report for links to free content on freelance marketing to help you do this.

## Highlights of Key Findings

**83% of freelancers who took the survey find marketing to be a challenge:**

- “Biggest challenge”: 17% of freelancers
- “One of the major challenges”: 25% of freelancers
- “Somewhat of a challenge”: 27% of freelancers
- “Minor challenge”: 14% of freelancers:

Only 17% of freelancers said marketing is not a challenge.

**The top 3 marketing challenges are:**

1. Understanding how and where to get better clients
2. Making time for marketing
3. Finding clients to market to.

**Networking is the #1 source of the best clients for freelancers.** Other top sources of the best clients are LinkedIn and direct email.

**Most freelancers are already using some of the most effective marketing tools:**

- 76% of freelancers have a specialty.
- 99% of freelancers have a LinkedIn profile.
- 70% of freelancers have a website for their freelance business.

**84% of freelancers use social networks for business. LinkedIn is the #1 social network:**

- 96% of freelancers who use social networks for business use LinkedIn.
- 68% of freelancers who use LinkedIn say it’s “important” or “very important” in getting clients.

**91% of freelancers belong to professional associations.** Of the freelancers who belong to professional associations:

- 61% of freelancers say professional associations are “important” or “very important” in getting clients.

**Few freelancers are taking full advantage of referrals, one of the easiest ways to get great clients:**

- **Just 41% of freelancers get at least 51% of their business from referrals.**
- 43% of freelancers get less than 25% of their business from referrals.

**Many freelancers are getting much of their business from repeat business from satisfied clients:**

- **79% of freelancers get at least 51% of their business from satisfied clients.**
- Just 12% of freelancers get less than 25% of their business from satisfied clients.

**Many freelancers are making decent money, but some could be making substantially more:**

- 65% of freelancers make at least \$75 per hour:
  - 21% make \$75-100 per hour
  - 44% make more than \$100 per hour.
- 18% of freelancers make \$51-\$74 per hour.
- 12% of freelancers make \$25-\$50 per hour.
- 5% of freelancers make \$24 or less per hour.

# Survey Participants

## Years of Freelance Experience\*

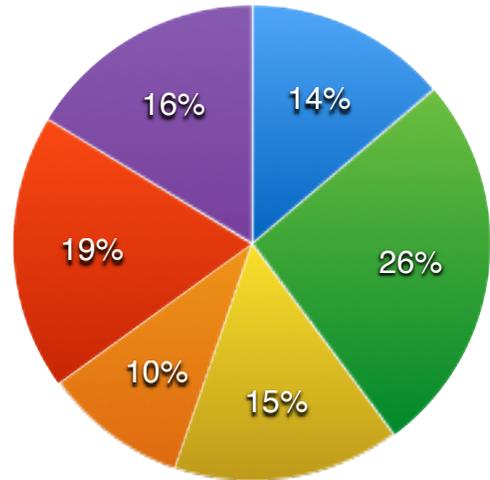
Survey respondents are a mix of new and experienced freelancers. Freelancers with 3 years of experience or less were the largest group (40%), followed by freelancers with 10+ years of experience (35%) and freelancers with 4 to 9 years of experience (25%). Seven respondents weren't freelancing yet.

\* 132 responses

### The Numbers\*

Less than 1 year	17
1-3 years	32
4-6 years	19
7-9 years	12
10-19 years	23
20 or more years	22

\* 125 responses



● Less than 1 year    ● 1-3 years    ● 4-6 years  
● 7-9 years    ● 10-19 years    ● 20+ years

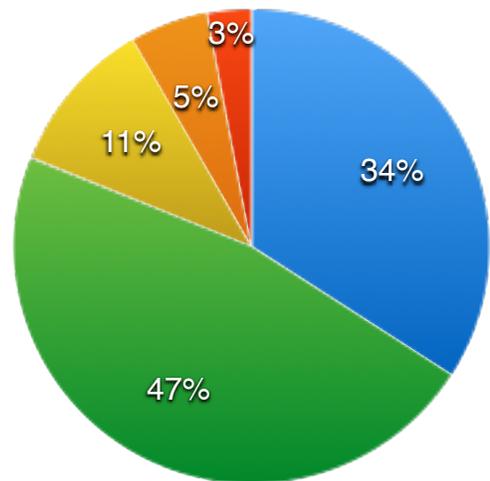
## Types of Freelancers

81% of the survey respondents were writers or writers and editors. The next largest group, at 16%, was editors and editors and writers. About 3% of the freelancers work in other fields.

### The Numbers\*

Writer	45
Writer + editor	62
Editor	14
Editor + writer	7
Other	4

\* 132 responses



● Writer    ● Writer + editor    ● Editor  
● Editor + writer    ● Other

## Marketing Challenges

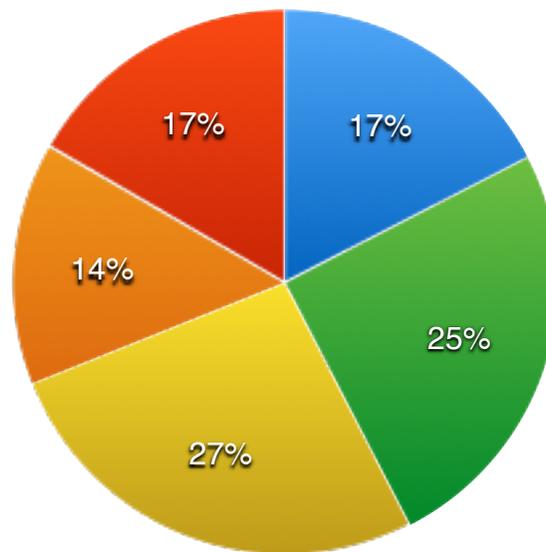
83% of freelancers who took the survey find marketing to be a challenge:

- 17% of freelancers: “Biggest challenge” (23 freelancers)
- 25% of freelancers: “One of the major challenges” (33 freelancers)
- 27% of freelancers: “Somewhat of a challenge” (35 freelancers)
- 14% of freelancers: “Minor challenge” (19 freelancers)

Only 17% of freelancers (22) said marketing is not a challenge.

\* 132 responses

### How Challenging is Marketing?



- Biggest challenge
- A major challenge
- Somewhat of a challenge
- Minor challenge
- Not a challenge

# Top Marketing Challenges

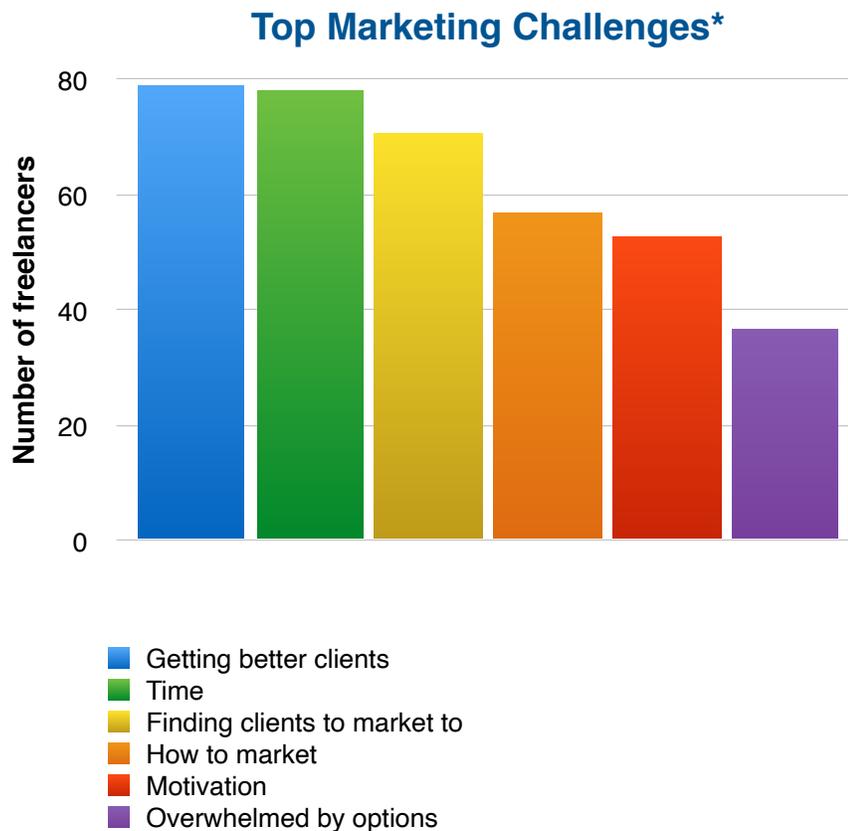
The top 3 marketing challenges are:\*

1. Understanding how and where to get better clients
2. Making time for marketing.
3. Finding clients to market to.

Understanding how and where to get better clients and making time for marketing were nearly tied for the top challenge.

These were the same top 3 challenges as in the 2019 survey but finding clients to market to was #2 and making time for marketing was #3.

\* 132 responses



\* Ranked #1, #2, or #3

# Sources of the Best Clients

The top 3 sources of the best clients are:\*

1. Networking
2. LinkedIn
3. Direct email

More freelancers said networking and LinkedIn were top sources of their best clients in 2021 than in 2019:

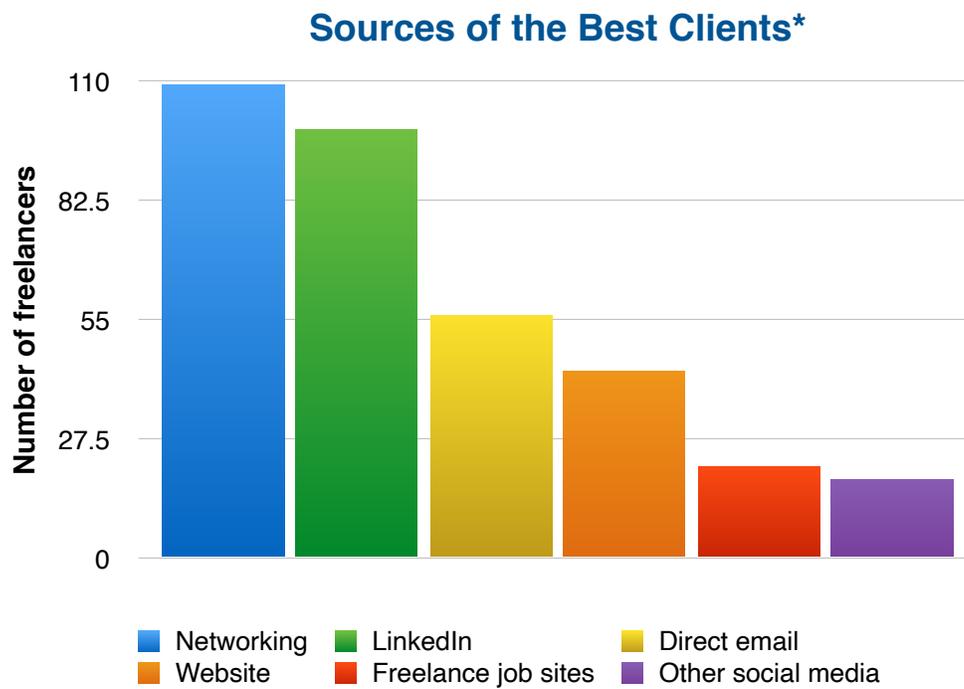
## Networking:

- 2021: 83%
- 2019: 75%

## LinkedIn:

- 2021: 76%
- 2019: 52.2%

\* 131 responses



\* Ranked #1, #2, or #3

## Specialty (or Niche)

76% of freelancers (102) have a specialty (or niche). 24% of freelancers (29) do not have a specialty.\* This was very similar to 2019, where 77% of freelancers had a specialty .

*\* 131 responses*

## Types of Specialties

Medical writing or communication was by far the most common specialty:

Medical writing/communication	89% (91)
Business	4% (4)
Other (no more than 1 each)	7% (7)

*\* 102 responses*

## LinkedIn Profiles

99% of freelancers (131) have a LinkedIn profile. Just 1% of freelancers (1) do not have a LinkedIn profile.\* This was very similar to 2019, where 98% of freelancers had a LinkedIn profile

*\* 132 responses*

## Websites

70% of freelancers (93) have a website for their freelance business and 30% of freelancers (39) do not have a website.\* This was down slightly from 2019, where 76% of freelancers had a website.

*\* 132 responses*

## Use of Social Networks for Business

84% of freelancers (111) use social networks for business and 16% (21) do not.\* This was very similar to 2019, where 83% of freelancers used social networks for business.

The top 3 social networks used were LinkedIn (by far the top social network), Twitter, and Facebook:

1. LinkedIn: 96% of freelancers
2. Twitter: 24% of freelancers
3. Facebook: 19% of freelancers.

*\* 132 responses*

## Importance of Social Networks in Getting Clients

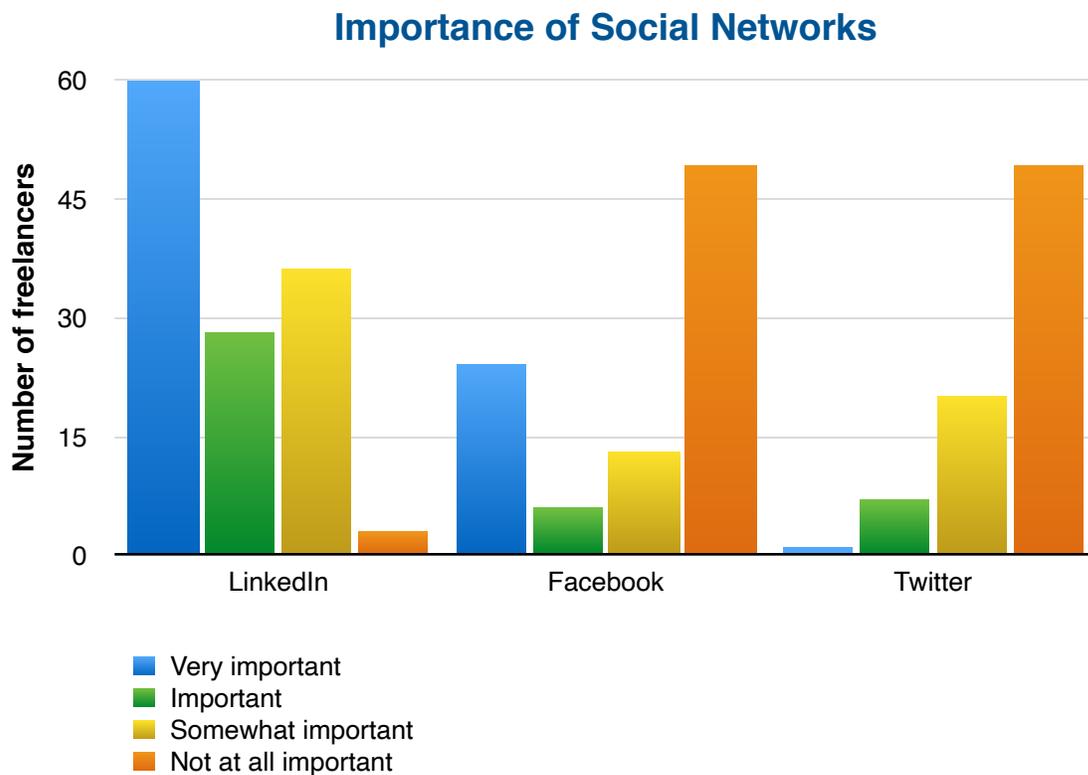
In helping freelancers get clients, LinkedIn was by far the most important social network:\*

- 68% of freelancers (88 freelancers) said LinkedIn is “important” or “very important” in getting clients. This was an increase from 62% in 2019.

Also rated as “important” or “very important” in getting clients were:

- Facebook: 7% of freelancers (11 freelancers)
- Twitter: 7% of freelancers (11 freelancers).

\* 129 respondents



## Professional Associations

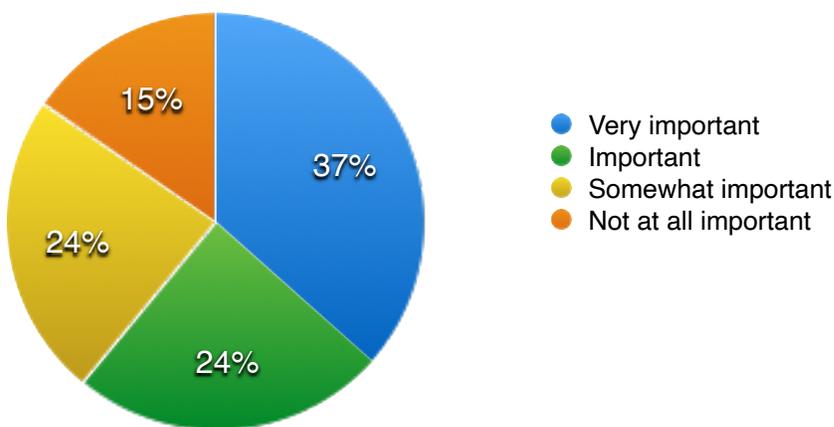
91% of freelancers (119) belong to professional associations and 9% (12) do not.\* This is a slight increase from 2019 when 86% of freelancers belonged to professional associations.

\* 131 respondents

### Professional Associations and Getting Clients

61% of freelancers (75) who belong to professional associations say that they're "important" or "very important" in helping them get clients.\* This is the same percentage as in 2019. Just 15% of freelancers (15) say professional associations are "not at all important" in helping them get clients, a slight increase over 11% in 2019.

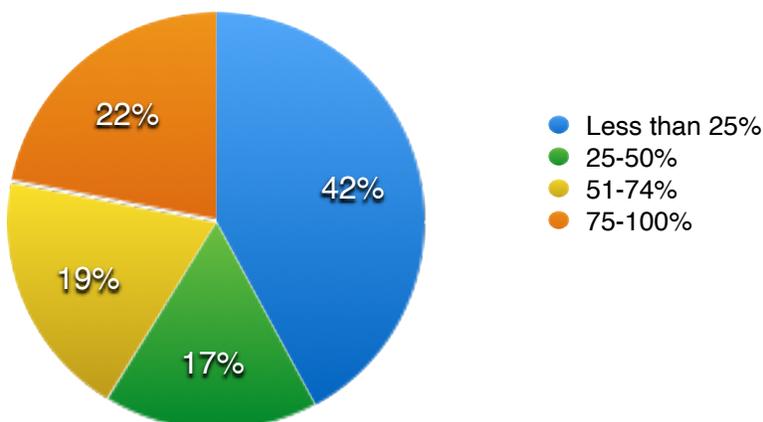
\* 123 respondents



## Referrals

Just 41% of freelancers (47) get at least 51% of their business from referrals, up slightly from 36% in 2019.\* 43% of freelancers (48) get less than 25% of their business from referrals, nearly identical to 42% in 2019.

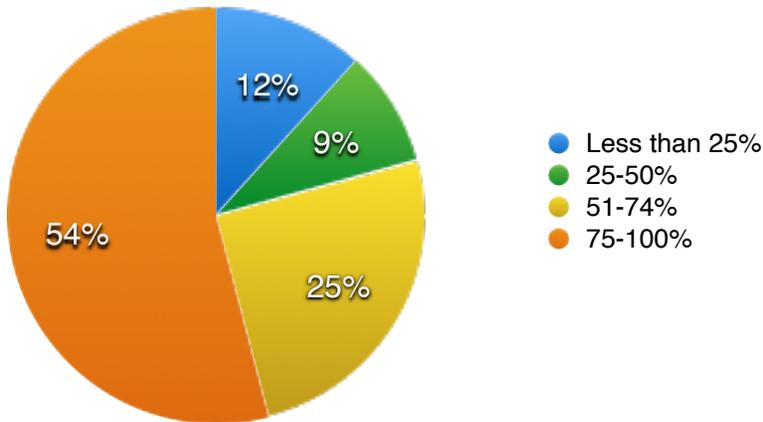
\* 115 respondents



## Repeat Business from Clients

79% of freelancers (78) get at least 51% of their business from repeat business from clients, down slightly from 75% in 2019. Just 12% of freelancers (13) get less than 25% of their business from repeat business, similar to the 11% of freelancers in 2019.\*

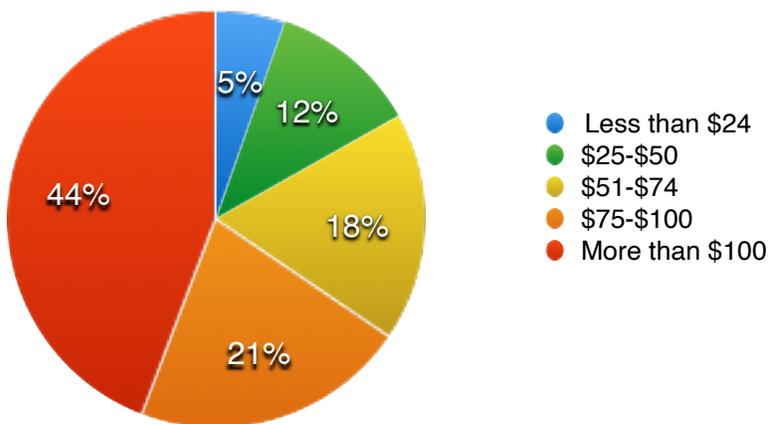
\* 113 respondents



## How Much Freelancers Make

65% of freelancers (74) make at least \$75 per hour, similar to 64% in 2019. 5% (6) make less than \$24 per hour, a decrease from 12% in 2019.\*

\* 113 respondents



## What Freelancers Want to Learn

The top 3 marketing tools freelancers most want to learn about are:\*

1. Marketing plan
2. Branding
3. Direct email.

\* 112 responses



\* Ranked #1, #2, or #3

## Free Marketing Resources

Here are some free resources to help you get the steady, high-paying clients you deserve and build a stable, successful freelance business.

### 10 Steps to Getting the Steady, High-Paying Freelance Clients You Deserve

A proven step-by-step process that's helped hundreds of freelancers build their confidence and their income.

Get your [free guide](#).

### Branding

[Stand Out in a Sea of Freelancers: Your Brand](#)

See 3 examples of freelance brands:

[Kathleen Labonge's freelance brand](#)

[Kristin Harper's freelance brand](#)

[Eva Stabenow's freelance brand](#)

### Direct email

[How to Get Steady, High-Paying Clients with Direct Email](#)

[Direct Email Swipe File](#), a collection of proven templates and examples

### Freelance Marketing Blog

Practical advice on marketing for freelancers. Many posts include free tools and/or freelance success stories.

Visit the [Freelance Marketing blog](#).

