

Freelancing in a pandemic - May the best pocket win!

By [Vivian Chuene](#)

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In August 2019, I left my full-time job for freelancing. Besides the fact that I really did not find any joy in my everyday routine (wake up, drive to the office Monday to Friday from 9 - 5), it really wasn't exciting for me any more, and I desperately needed change.



Source: www.pexels.com

So I made a decision, I took a courageous leap and started freelancing. It would also allow me the flexibility I needed to pursue my personal creative projects - so I did, I started the freelance journey and within a month bagged my first project.

This was an amazing project, it would ensure an income and sustain me for at least three months before I could find another project - which I did.

Luck was definitely on my side, clients that I had previously worked with were catching wind of me being a freelancer, and they were sending work my way, so I never really had to worry about bills not getting paid. This was consistent until March 2020.

Enter Covid-19, nothing could have prepared me for the turn of events - I wish I had known just how rough the storm was about to shake us up. Clients are starting to cut budget drastically and usually, we all know that PR is usually the first budget to go.

There were still small projects that I was supporting, but off course, it's not as busy as it was months prior to the pandemic, and now it is a constant financial struggle. Having clients in the Lifestyle and Entertainment Space (read alcohol) meant that I had to take the knock as well as clients saw no value in spending money when they weren't fully operational as a business at the time - in fact, they had internal retrenchments that were happening, so I was really just a small piece in the crumbling pie.

A few things that I have learnt during my time as a freelancer:

1. Network of clients

Having a strong and big network of clients saved me in many instances, when one client had no projects for me in the one month, the other client had that and that helped plan financially no matter how small the invoice amount is.

2. Payment terms

The payment terms that I had in place for myself protected me in the long run, I always asked for 50% payment ahead of starting a project. I cannot be fighting Covid and payments from clients at the same time.

3. Mental health check

It is very important to keep one's mental health in check. When I felt like I was losing it, I knew that I needed to take a step back, breathe and release the energy.

Meditation and affirmations got me through the toughest moments of the pandemic.

4. Downsize if you have to

During the initial lockdown, I decided to give up my apartment and move back home - this was one of the best decisions I could've made. Not only for my pockets but also, I would be in lockdown with family versus being all by myself. Everything at home would be taken care of while I try to get rid of my debt.

5. Freelancing is not for the faint-hearted

It really does take a lot of tenacity, patience and mental strength! Don't go into it if you're not ready.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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