

get the job



Leap to Freelancing

You might have thought about it: taking the leap and quitting your 9-to-5 to freelance, consult or start your own business. There are some very real struggles — such as learning to live on a less-than-dependable regular income — but the rewards are deep if you love what you do.

Think about how you will transition from your current position to a new position, and actually write it down. It might sound dull, but putting the words on paper can help you feel the full weight of the decision.

Before you jump in head first, take the following necessary steps to build a solid professional foundation and avoid feeling sore from a very hard fall.

CREATE A FINANCIAL PLAN

When you transition from a full-time job to freelancing, you are essentially starting a business. You will quickly learn that taxes are a pain when you are a freelancer. There are things you can do to make it as easy on yourself as possible.

For example, set up a separate checking account, savings account and credit line solely for business expenses. This makes it easier to track expenses for tax purposes.

BUILD YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Networking is an invaluable professional skill — especially when you are a one-person show. Take the necessary steps to get your face and work out there in front of other people.



This means crafting and updating your social media channels, such as LinkedIn, but it also means setting up lunches, attending professional mixers and perfecting

your “elevator pitch” — being able to sell yourself in just a few minutes — so that you come off relaxed and confident.

WORK “DOUBLE”

In order to perform the above previous three steps, you will inevitably need to begin freelancing before you leave your full-time position.

It will take time to begin earning a livable wage from freelancing alone, so you will need to work incredibly hard and boost your savings before taking the leap.

'Snow Bird' Jobs

When the weather begins to turn cold, there is often a mass exodus of seniors from northern states who pack up and head south for the worst of winter.

This population is affectionately known as “snow birds,” or winter travelers. However, for many, this migration to temporarily seek out a warmer climate does not mitigate the need for employment. Here are five “snow bird-friendly” or part-time positions to consider.

RESORT AND THEME PARK POSITIONS

Many popular theme parks are located where the weather is temperate all year round and are always in need of extra help.

Seasonal openings can include anything from assisting customers on and off rides, clean-up crew, gift shop staffing — or even costumed character acting for the adventurous type.

FREELANCE WORK

Don't forget about past work experience. Parlay skills from your previous 9-to-5 into consulting work and start adding value to business clients.

The great thing about this type of work is that it tends to not be geographically bound — meaning it is an operation you can continue back home.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHING

Tap into any past experience you have. If you have a college degree, most school districts will put you in a classroom for a daily wage.

You might have to acquire additional certification, depending on the state, but this is typically much less intensive a process than certifying as a full-time teacher.

WATCH PEOPLE'S PETS

This is a growing industry — with



mobile apps like DogVacay and Rover making it easy for busy people to find pet lovers to board or walk their dogs.

After registering as a dog walker, the platform makes it easy to see dogs who need to be walked in your area, their distance from you and what the

job pays. Take on as much or as little as you want.

RETAIL OR SERVICE WORK

While many seniors choose to avoid this option, retail work does not have to involve crowded shopping malls or

busy restaurants. Think of places off the beaten path — such as the local ice cream shop, nursery or bookstore.

Working at a locally owned business will give you the chance to learn more about your community, while also making strong relationships.

Interview Dos and Don'ts

An interview can be a stressful event — even for the most seasoned worker. Employ the following dos and don'ts to ease your anxiety and make a great impression.

Do research the company. This will help you gain a better understanding of what they do and how they've done it thus far. Having knowledge of the company's history might also help you better connect in the interview.

Do anticipate being asked certain questions and prepare your answers. There are some questions that are standard. Know what you want to say.

Don't over-prepare. The last thing you want to do is write out a script, because it is a 100-percent guarantee that the interview won't follow it.

Do know your own story. Be familiar with your work history and recognize what might come off as a weakness. If there are gaps in your experience or education, be ready to explain why they're there.

Don't lie. Lies always have a way of coming out, and then you will be seen as a liar.

Do dress appropriately for the job, company and industry. If you are unsure of what's appropriate, err on the side of



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caution. More formal is always better than too casual.

Do plan to arrive early. Ten to 15 minutes is a good rule of thumb. This also provides a buffer in case you hit traffic or encounter some other mis-

hap.

Do ask your own questions. You are not the only party in this interview, so make sure you put the hiring manager through his paces. This does not mean you should interro-

gate them, or asking questions that make you look unprepared.

Don't inquire about salary, vacations, bonuses or other benefits until after you've received a job offer.

Do send a thank-you note, thanking the hiring team for their consideration. This is your final opportunity to get your name in front of your interviewer and leave a positive impression.

End on a Positive Note

Even the most supportive of workplaces can be stressful. Even when you love your job, you can feel as if you are always behind or could be doing more.

While there is always room for improvement, many times what needs improvement is our mindset. Take the last 15 minutes of your day to complete the following actions and end your day on a positive note. It won't be long before these small steps positively affect the rest of your work — and your overall career trajectory.

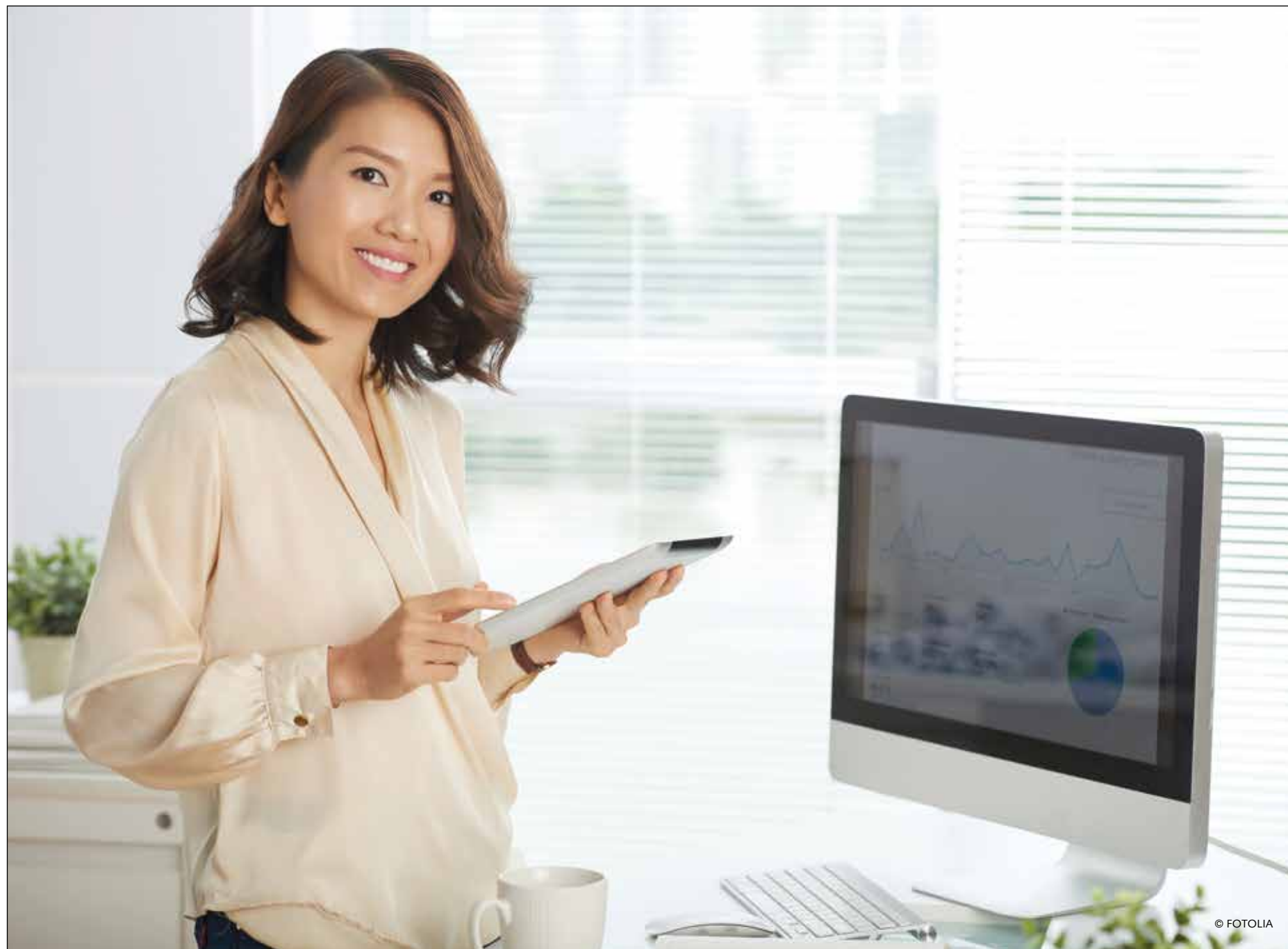
REVIEW YOUR DAY

Take stock of what you've been able to accomplish in the past eight(ish) hours. Often times, we get stuck in a negative mindset and focus only what we were not able to complete.

This helps you quantify and assess your strengths. Even if you haven't completed any major projects, remember the smaller items on the to-do list that you did accomplish will chip away at the bigger goals.

PREPARE FOR TOMORROW

Create a list of the tasks that need to be completed the next day and organize them in a way that is effective for you — such as by priority level, or by



how much time each will require.

Next review your schedule for any upcoming meetings. This heads-up could remind you that you need to dress slightly differently the next day or need to get in earlier than normal.

TIDY YOUR WORK SPACE

Make sure your desk is clear and files, supplies and materials are put away. Ending the day with a clean space will help you feel more in control, and starting the day with a clean space will keep you focused.

Cleaning up tends to be a task about which we procrastinate. Don't allow yourself to

get sidetracked first thing in the morning with “house-keeping.”

LEVERAGE THE EXTRA TIME

If you're actively looking for other employment, taking control of your workspace and improving your mental clarity will leave you feeling refreshed

for conducting your search.

Use your evening and early morning time to search job boards and send emails to past colleagues to let them know you're on the market. Spend some time refreshing your resume or online presence. These small steps can lead to a big splash in the job market.



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Professional Mentors

Executives “at the top” of your industry didn’t get there on their own; they had a whole network of people who advised, guided and supported them on their journey to success. More than likely, they had a professional mentor.

BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP

Mentors offer a range of benefits that make it infinitely easier for you to succeed in your chosen profession.

Knowledge and contacts: A professional mentor offers knowledge of the industry (if they work within your field) and plenty of interesting — and often influential — contacts.

Skill and insight: You can learn many useful skills from having a professional mentor, including appropriate behavior, protocols and best business practices.

Perspective: A good mentor will point out your blind spots and provide a new and useful perspective on

a situation. Remember they bring with them not only an outside opinion but a wider experience from which to draw.

Support and solidarity: — Success can be a lonely endeavor. But it doesn’t have to be. A professional mentor provides emotional support and a sense of “peer partnership.”

FINDING A MENTOR

While there are services available to match you with a mentor, you can always find one yourself. There is the possibility that someone will approach you. But if no one has, think of whom you would like to approach.

Who do you admire? Who does what you want to be doing?

Don’t be afraid to look outside of your industry. You are looking for someone who cares about passing along what they’ve learned along the way — someone who wants you to have an easier path to success than they did.

CULTIVATING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

The key to a successful mentorship is cultivating and maintaining a healthy relationship with your mentor. Be sure that both parties clearly communicate their expectations of

the relationship — such as how often you plan to check in or meet in person to discuss current projects, future goals and other topics of professional development.

It is important to remember not to get too focused on your own path to success; a mentorship is a relationship — a respectful connection between two parties in which both can learn from the experience of the other and grow professionally.

A successful and effective mentor relationship strengthens the industry as a whole through knowledge sharing and the development of leadership qualities.

Graduate School

Even if you love your industry, you might find you need additional training to advance your goals and positioning. Attending graduate school might be an option for you.

Obtaining an advanced degree is an important decision that will dramatically change your life for the next two to four years. In other words, it should not be taken lightly.

If, after weighing the potential financial and emotional burden on you and your family, you still decide this is the right course for you, take the following three steps to enjoy every advantage graduate school has to offer.

CHOOSE A PROGRAM

Once you've been accepted into a few programs, deepen your research. You should have already conducted a fair amount of research into the schools and programs before applying, but now your research can take a different form: that of a comparative pro-con list.

This also holds true if you've only received one acceptance. Get to know the professors and their research. This is the first step in building a new professional network. These people



will be invaluable to you.

HAVE A FINANCIAL PLAN

Who will be responsible for paying for tuition, books and supplies? Most graduate students do not live on campus, so where will you be living? Will you have to move in order to be closer to your university?

All of these things should be

budgeted for wisely. If you plan to take out any student loans or receive scholarship or grant money, be mindful of how much money you will receive and what it will be put toward.

These will be financially leaner years — unless you plan on continuing to work full-time — and it will pay off to be prepared.

DEFINE TIME BOUNDARIES

You will need to dedicate a lot of time to your research. You also will need to spend time performing the mundane tasks that make up life. (Laundry and dishes, anyone?) Spending quality time with family and friends might also be high on your priority list.

Balancing all these things can be easier said than done when you throw graduate school into the mix. Be sure to set aside time for each of these activities.

You might even have to resort to a physical block schedule that you post on the fridge. While it's not glamorous, it is effective.

Considering a New Job

The most common reason for taking a new job is increased pay. While more money isn't a bad reason, it is not the only consideration in thinking about your overall happiness at work.

Money can't buy everything, after all. Before accepting a new position, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Will I be challenged or learn anything new? You might have started your job search with the idea of taking an "easier" role to reduce the stress in your life. But you could eventually find yourself

feeling under-utilized. Feeling challenged is important to feeling successful and believing that your work has meaning.

2. What opportunities are there to grow professionally? This is important, especially if you have ambition and expect to move up within the company. Look into what continuing education or

workshops the company offers, and ask if they pay for employees to attend conferences or obtain additional certifications.

3. How will I be evaluated? You need to know what the company's ruler is for success, how often they measure and how supportive they are to ensure employees reach those goals. Don't start a job if you are unsure of how your performance will be assessed.

4. What is the office culture, or workplace flexibility, like? Company culture plays an integral role in our overall happiness and workplace satisfaction. If you like

to be around people, the "team spirit" and collaborative nature of a workplace should be very important to you. Also note any policies that suggest workplace flexibility, such as the option to telecommute or parlay overtime hours into personal time off.

5. How is leadership handled within the company? Basically, who will be your boss and what is his leadership style? A good manager is key to a healthy work environment. While no one is perfect, you should look for behavior that suggests your manager wants to see employees succeed and grow.

