Top five (+1) pieces of software every freelancer needs

Author : GregDillon

Categories : [Freelance business management](#)

Date : January 10, 2013

Operating your business in an efficient way. Software every freelancer needs

Depending on how long you've been freelancing and what delivery systems you use there are a plethora of different apps and software that can get you through.

Here is a list of five (+1) software strategy tools every freelancer needs that I love and use in my day to day management and delivery of projects without having to break the bank to buy über expensive software, let me know in the comments section what you use of if you use the same ones but differently.

Note I only use Mac and iOS devices so these are largely skewed towards this platform, would be keen to hear from a reader who is a Windows user who would like to guest post a Windows version of this post…

Five + 1 pieces of software every freelancer needs

Number One - Evernote

By far my most used and move loved app, I am actually writing this post on Evernote right now. It manages all my thoughts, splits business ideas and ventures into different notebooks trackable by tags and allows me to keep project specific work organised on the fly.

Evernote works across my iPad and iPhone too so whatever I type on any version of it automatically syncs with my other devices, worth upgrading to premium to lose the adverts and concentrate on content.

For lists the check-mark tool is invaluable to me and lets me write epic to do lists that I can tick off and complete as I go along - not a new idea but one that feels a lot more natural on this system.

Something else I love is that as I categorise my notes quite comprehensively through both tags and notebooks, if I'm showing a client something I can just show them their project's detail and notes without them seeing who else I'm working with or accidentally seeing confidential information.

[Cost: free, or around £40 for annual premium user account](#)

Number Two - Penultimate

Made by the same guys who make Evernote, this is a fantastic iPad app - just make sure you get a stylus (even cheap ones from eBay work great).

This app lets you create sketchbooks of ideas. So be it hand-written notes or hand-sketched wireframes of websites or logo concepts etc. it can all be done in there with different pen thicknesses and colours.

It automatically backs up to your Evernote account too so everything eventually gets stored in one place!

[Cost: free](#)

Number Three - Pages

From Apple, this is by far the most useful tool I have in my arsenal to help me get paid! I, as my clients, prefer invoices be emailed in a PDF format for them to print and markup at their leisure and Pages delivers that perfectly.

From standard sample pages you can create unique invoicing templates that you simply update with that week/month's detail or new client contact details and hit 'send as PDF' to compose an

email with it already attached.

The beauty in the system, for me, is that if you are an iCloud user your documents are automatically synced across devices so an invoice I send from my MacBook Pro is instantly viewable on my iPhone or iPad. Similarly, invoices I create on the move are viewable on my laptop allowing me to always have the latest to hand when reconciling payments etc.

Comes with iWorks for Mac and iOS app is £6.99

Number Four - Numbers

Similar to Pages, this is an Apple product where the ease of use is enhanced by iCloud.

Not being a fan of Excel, I feel more comfortable with Numbers as it feels a little softer and more forgiving - whilst still having all the power needed to create some intricate spreadsheets. I have even planned my entire wedding using Numbers as a guest management tool and contact management tool for vendors… and table planning.

Comes with iWorks for Mac and iOS app is £6.99

Number Five - TweetDeck

Simply the best tool for managing multiple social media accounts across multiple formats and devices.

The key thing here, aside from keeping up to date with Twitter and the like, is that you can set up personalised search columns that update all the time… so for me I have four set up:

- Freelance; aggregates all tweets with the word freelance in to see if there is anything of interest newswise
- Freelance strategist; to track whenever anyone puts out a job requirement for a strategist that I could fulfil
- Freelance planner; same as above
- Strategist; same as above

These not only keep me up to date with industry news but also keep me up to date with job opportunities and allows me to connect with relevant people that may lead to future work

Cost: free (well, your time in setting it up…)

BONUS + 1 - DropBox - http://db.tt/LtU671uZ

Simple to use file backup and distribution service.

I use DropBox to back up crucial files such as company accounts and live projects - all free of charge. I also have each in separate folders that are private and only accessible by who I want to see the files - for example my accountant can see my accounts, but nothing else, my clients can see their files but nothing else.

One of the best parts about the service, away from the useful ness, is learning how to use it. They treat new users to a great quest of ramification greatness by rewarding you with more storage each time you 'learn' something new about the service or try out an additional feature so that you are encouraged to explore the apps, the online service and to use it fully to get the most out of it.

[Cost: free (for solo user with limited storage of 3gb), up to $400 for 500gb power user](#)

What other software is crucial to your freelance business? What would you class as software every freelancer needs?