

What freelancers and agencies want to tell each other

By [Belinda Murray](#)

16 Sep 2022

SA's freelance creatives are in high demand. What can agencies learn from them, and what can SA freelancers learn from how they are perceived by the local industry?



Source: Jason Goodman © [Unsplash](#) Briefing freelance creatives properly by agencies is imperative

The creative world has shifted in the last two years and creatives have had to evolve with it. South Africa's freelance creatives have never been more in demand both locally and internationally.

When Covid hit, demand from the international market went ballistic but the majority are working on local accounts too. But they have more choice now so it's up to marketers and agencies to respect their work and their autonomy.

After all, these are independent contractors, entrepreneurs, running their own successful businesses, and enjoying unprecedented demand for their services at home and abroad.

To bridge the gap, and to help both agencies and freelancers, I asked my independent contractors and agency clients about the value of freelancers, what agencies can implement to retain their full-time staff and where freelancers can do (even) better.

Things freelancers want to tell local agencies

These are the most common, unprompted responses to questions asked in an anonymous survey of freelancers:

- Please brief properly - If you don't really understand the brief, how are the creatives supposed to understand it?
- Know what you want upfront. Brief clearly. Then trust the creative. When asked how often they received poor briefs, 47% ticked Usually, 40% went with Sometimes, 10% opted for Rarely and just 3% chose Never.
- Pay your people properly and on time.
- Not all freelancers are the same. Therefore, not all freelance rates are the same.
- Don't undersell or undercut freelancers. Understand the value of creative work / experience and try to remunerate accordingly.
- Trust and appreciate your creatives
- Trust that I've thought about your problems deeply.

- Be kind. I've been able to create the best work of my career over the past year because I've been around people who are genuinely caring and nice. Egos are old news.
- Working out of the office gives us the space to think more clearly about your business and what you require.
- Fewer meetings, more action.
- We miss the camaraderie, but we don't miss toxic culture, addiction to stress, egos, no flexibility. Hierarchy. Egos. A lot of wasted time. Hurry up and wait. Fake ads during awards entry season. The lack of boundaries. The regular expectation of weekend and late-night work. Having to jump through hoops with a complete disregard for people's personal lives.

The agency perception

- 45% of agencies polled "absolutely" believe they are getting good value from freelancers, and 35% say "mostly, from the good ones". (20% said half and half)
- Challenges when working with freelancers include a perception that the good ones are always booked (25%), cost too much (21%) and tend to juggle too many clients, which can impact deadlines (33%). (13% prefer not to work in office, 8% take time understanding brand/getting up to speed on brief)
- 42% of agencies said their favourite freelancers are reliable and deliver a high standard of work, 29% said they are quicker and meet deadlines, and 21% love their drive and passion. (8% said they are more flexible)
- 63% felt the work produced by full-time and freelance creatives was of an equal standard; 25% said they got better work from freelancers; 8% were unsure; and 4% felt they got better work from their full-time staff
- 41% said they found freelancers easily adapted to agency-specific platforms and another 41% agreed that this wasn't an issue. (18% said not adaptable)



The next war for talent is for skilled freelancers and independent consultants

14 Mar 2022



Advice to SA Agencies

- Local agencies will always be looked after by our freelancers - there are enough of them out there. It's important now to book top creatives faster and for longer. Plan, plan and plan I say.
- The competition with international agencies is actually good for all of us but do take note of these freelance entrepreneurs' concerns around respect and prompt, fair payment.
- Respect is the watchword. Respect for their level of craft.

Advice to SA freelance Creatives

- Freelancing is hard. You are definitely only as good as your last job. There is no hiding, there is no escaping, there is just you and your work. Slack off and you are tickets. Produce poor work, you're tickets. It's high pressure, client facing, and there's nobody to manage your time, your calendar or your lunch. It's just you now. And it's about time. You can do it.
- International work is there and growing, but the trick is to win that race slow and steady.
- Greed will kill this opportunity if all we are after is the money. Get great briefs, work hard, get paid fairly, stay in South Africa and be exposed internationally. It's a win-win. And don't take on too much. Be honest about your workload or if you'll have to work the night shift to take it on. That way no one gets burnt.
- I love working with professional creatives who communicate strongly, the ones who beg for more work, who give a damn, who go over and above. They shine and they will always get work. Always.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A creative outsourcing process consultant, Belinda helps businesses all over the world improve their ways of working. She also outsources creative talent.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>