

## **1. How have you found working freelance? What are the highs and lows, the frustrations and the bonuses?**

Working freelance is not to everybody's taste; you either like it or you hate it - depends on how busy you are, whether you have the discipline to work the long hours that you would need to make yourself a success in your field of expertise as well as tolerance to the solitude which some providers find. Fortunately I love the solitude that working freelance gives me. I am a provider of general, special and virtual secretarial office services, which requires of me to work at a fast-track pace that sometimes I wonder if there are enough hours in the day to get the workload completed in my stipulated 24/48 hour turnaround - I need not to be working in an environment which is noisy or distracting in any way.

Luckily I don't have many lows to speak of - those that have occurred are quickly overcome i.e. absurd timescale demands, having to explain to clientele that they are 'not the only one(s) on my client list; stop trying to queue jump etc' and a lack of communication with family and friends due to long hours: I tend to have to tell myself "think positive, think past the hurdle - brush myself down, pick myself up and get on with it"..... Working from home is the biggest bonus of all and I would class this as a massive high. Business for us is going very well - I work full-time hours and then some; it is not unusual for me to be still at my desk completing work at 10pm of an evening; weekend working is less as I do try to at least have some fun - wouldn't want to be known as 'Tina - the all work and no play businesswoman'. To be able to walk from one room to another in a familiar surrounding e.g. lounge to office etc is an experience second to none - if I were to have to go to an office daily, I very much doubt I would do the hours that I do and if I did, I doubt I would enjoy it half so much.

Since I started freelance secretarial services, the frustrations over the past 4 years have been the odd bolshy client who expected the work that was e-mailed two moments ago to be typed/presented and ready for collection immediately, the expectancy to remember each and every one of my individual clients' foibles and idiosyncrasies, the odd reference when typing a addendum document - mention is made of a "typing error" as it is 'easier to blame the typist and not the author for the mistake'! My biggest reward for working freelance is the satisfaction that in my time, I have turned several of my clients' small/medium-sized businesses into bigger successes. Predominantly I work for a lot of clients who trade without utilising PCs or intelligent communication (IT) of any kind, so to offer a fax/e-mail bureau service, fast turnaround of audio transcription/manuscript, proposals, presentations and any other marketing tools, correspondence etc that they can use to promote their business and mimic an environment with these facilities is of paramount importance. Other companies who use our services are larger corporations needing ad hoc secretarial assistance due to their staffing levels being affected for whatever reason and as you only pay for 'Time on Task', no costly temping agency fees are incurred.

## **2. Has Freelancers In The UK helped you/your business? We'd like to think so, but how?**

Yes, it has. Being a member of Freelancers in the UK has opened my eyes to the vast differences in our fields of expertise and the functions and services we provide to our clientele. As the first member to upgrade in July 2005, my profile and portfolio was noticed by many and with it a steady upturn in visitors to our sites, additional registrations to our Tesla Typing! site and off the back of it, an article written by journalist Carol Burns which was featured in the December 2005 issue of 'Recruitment Matters', trade magazine specialising in recruitment and looking at encouraging innovation.

### **3. What are the biggest challenges for you in 2006?**

We have plans to further vastly promote our online copy and digital audio typing examination website - [www.teslatyping.co.uk](http://www.teslatyping.co.uk). We launched this site last April and upgraded it to offer bulk purchases for corporate clients, giving them their own unique co-branded login area for use on an ongoing basis. As the World's first site of its kind...this is going well but as the saying goes "business is great and we are looking for more!" We also launched an online retail website last year, together with a VA (virtual assistant) Directory site, so more work will be done on these to get their names recognised and utilised more.

We would also like to be in a position to be able to take on more of the secretarial services work and outsource on a larger scale to other freelancing virtual assistants to boost their own businesses - we have been trialling it this year with some known VAs through our membership with the IAVA (International Association of Virtual Assistants) and it has been received well; sourcing the right VA for the job is time-consuming though rewarding, as if a job is completed successfully, we as well as the VA who completed the work receives appreciative feedback which we then in turn use as testimonials after permission has been sought, thus creating a positive reputation, gaining more work from it and..... the cycle continues.