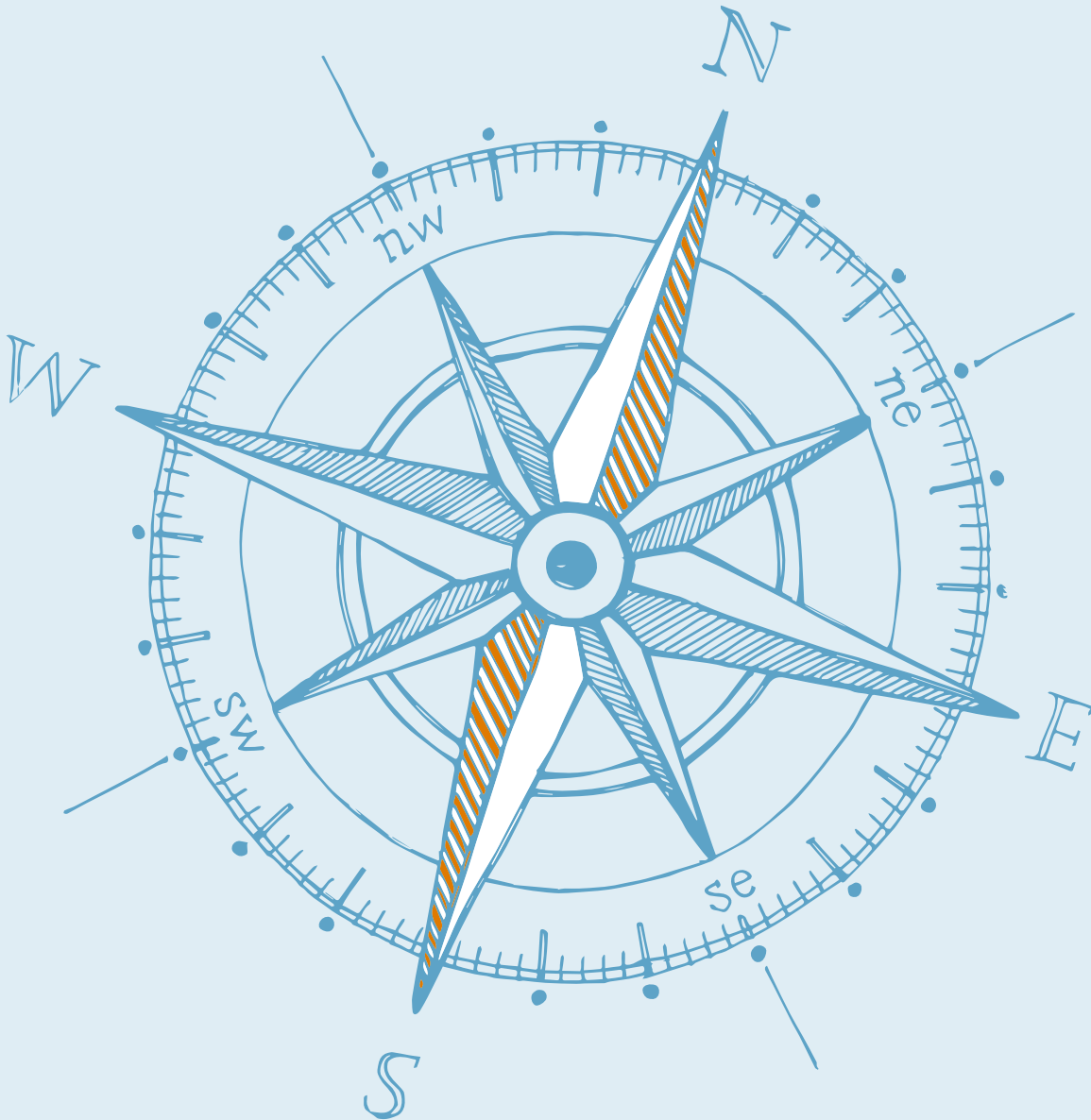


IABC | Toronto's Professional Independent Communicators

The Independent Life

A guide to launching and running your solo communications business

pictoronto.com





About PIC

More than 160 independent communicators in Toronto who are members of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) are part of Professional Independent Communicators (PIC).

Formed in 1998 as the Alliance of Independent Practitioners, PIC supports independent IABC/Toronto communicators through professional development, networking and marketing. Our mandate is:

- To provide a forum for entrepreneurial communicators to share common issues, concerns and ideas of interest.
- To position IABC independents as top of mind among IABC corporate members looking for communications help.
- To generate referrals among PIC members.

We connect our members through regular networking and professional development sessions and a monthly e-newsletter, [The Buzz](#). PIC members also enjoy an advertising discount in IABC Toronto's online [Marketplace](#), where IABC members can learn more about the skills and expertise our members offer.

If you are a member of IABC/Toronto and you are either a solo practitioner or you have an interest in launching an independent practice, you are welcome to join PIC at no additional charge.

For more information about PIC, please visit pictoronto.com or email toronto-pic@iabc.com.

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1. The Independent Life

Considering the independent life

Thinking of becoming an independent practitioner?



*1 in 6
of Canada's workforce
is self-employed or
16%.*

You're in good company. According to Statistics Canada, 16 percent of Canada's workforce is self-employed, and 80 percent of those who transitioned to self-employment did so voluntarily.

What makes independent life attractive to so many? For most PIC members, it all comes down to flexibility and better work/life balance.

Among the many benefits of an independent practice is scheduling your work time around important events in your life, whether that's chaperoning a child's field trip, making time for a special interest class or professional development opportunity, or taking an extra long weekend.

For some, the transition to independence is a way to take a career in a whole new direction – to build skills and expertise in new and innovative ways or to pursue the field you're most passionate about.

Whatever your reasons for considering an independent practice, do your research - and maybe a little soul-searching - before you leap. Is the independent life for you? Are you disciplined or easily distracted? Can you work alone or do you thrive on daily contact with other people? Are you willing to market yourself or are you uncomfortable blowing your own horn?

To help you identify whether being your own boss is right for you, check the Business Development Bank of Canada's Entrepreneurial potential [self-assessment](#).



What are your goals and objectives for your business?

If you're ready to make the leap, welcome to the club! PIC has compiled the information in this e-book to help you better understand what it means to work independently, and to guide you through the steps for starting your own business.

Getting started

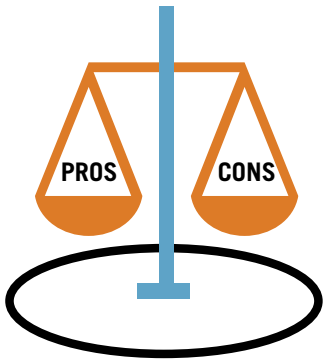
So, you've weighed the pros and the cons and realized that working on your own is right for you. Now what? Here are some important things to help you get started before you secure that first client:

- **Define your niche.** How will you differentiate yourself in the marketplace from others who provide similar services? What distinct skills or expertise do you bring to the table? What solution do you offer prospective clients?
- **Identify your target client.** What sector(s) do you want to support? What is it that you can offer that will address their needs? What do you know about your prospective clients?
- **Define your business type.** Is your business going to be a sole proprietorship, general partnership or a corporation?
- **Choose the name of your business.** Does the name tell people what you do? Is it a distinct name that people will remember?
- **Develop your business plan.** What are your goals and objectives for your business? What are your projected revenues?
- **Register your business.** You will receive a Business Identification Number (BIN) when you register your business name. Before registering the name, conduct a name search to ensure there are no other businesses registered with the same name.
- **Register for a number to collect the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).**

Which business type is right for you?

Before you register your business, you need to decide which type of business you wish to be:

- **Sole Proprietorship:** refers to a business with one owner, and that owner must be an individual. If the name of your business is under



There are pros and cons to each type of business, so take the time to review each option.

your legal name (e.g. Joe Brown) you don't have to formally register your business. If the name of your business is an extension of your legal name or a different name altogether (e.g., Joe Brown Communications, In Writing Only), you must register your business name by filing a Registration Form 1 under the Business Names Act.

- **General Partnership:** refers to a business with two or more owners. Unlike a sole proprietorship, a general partnership can consist of individuals, corporations or other unincorporated businesses. You must register your business name by filing a Registration Form 1 under the Business Names Act.
- **Corporation:** an incorporated entity with its own rights and responsibilities as a distinct person under the law. The owners of a corporation are not personally responsible for its debts.

[Canada Business Ontario](#) provides a great description of each of these [types of businesses](#), together with a list of the advantages and disadvantages of each. Take the time to review each option to decide which one is right for you.

If in doubt, and you're planning to work as an independent (not in partnership with another person), you can start off registering your business as a sole proprietorship. As you gain a better understanding of what your annual revenues will be, you can consider incorporation, which offers some tax advantages if your revenues are at a certain level.

What name will you give your business?

The name you choose for your business could have a significant effect on its success, so shouldn't be taken lightly. Make sure your company name is meaningful to your clients (does it give them some idea as to the services you offer?) and that it is distinct.

If you are registering your business as a sole proprietorship, you cannot use

words in your business name that suggest more than one individual is part of the company (i.e., partners, associates, group).

To find out whether anyone else is already using the name you have selected, you can conduct an **Ontario Business Name Search** a small business centre (see these listed under the section “*How can you register your business?*”).

Web resources:

- [Canada Business Ontario](#) offers tips on naming your business
- **Steve Slaunwhite** writes about [Choosing a Name For Your Freelance Writing Business](#).

How do you prepare a business plan?

Your business plan is the roadmap for your business. It outlines a description of your business, your goals and objectives, your understanding of your competition and the marketplace you are planning to enter, and your financial plan. A business plan is particularly important if you're going to approach banks or other funding sources to cover business startup costs.

Web resources:

- **[Government of Canada](#)** – has advice on writing a business plan, along with templates and sample plans.
- **[Canadian Bankers Association](#)** offers clear, concise steps to developing a business plan. You can also order a free copy of its publication, ‘*Your Roadmap: The Business Plan*.’
- **[Bank of Montreal](#)** offers Business Coach Series booklets with titles such as *Developing Your Business Plan*, and *Marketing Your Business*.
- **CIBC** has a [Small Business Start Strong Guide](#), financing tips, marketing advice and more.
- **TD Canada Trust's** [My Business Planner](#) walks you through the steps to create a business plan.

How can you register your business?

The Province of Ontario offers [small business advice](#) through **Small Business Enterprise Centres**. These have resources for the business startup, including onsite computers for registering your business, resource libraries, workshops and consultation services. Check a centre's website to see what's offered, or better yet, visit a centre. The following is a list of small business enterprise centres in the Greater Toronto Area:

- **Brampton Entrepreneur Centre**, Brampton City Hall, 2 Wellington St. W., Brampton. Tel: 905-874-2650. Email bec@brampton.ca. Website: www.brampton.ca/EN/Business/BEC/Pages/Welcome.aspx
- **Halton Region Business Development Centre**, 1151 Bronte Road, Oakville. Tel: 905-825-6000. Toll-Free: 1-866-442-5866. Email: busdev@halton.ca. Website: www.halton.ca/doing_business_in_halton/small_business_entrepreneurs/
- **Mississauga Business Enterprise Centre**, Central Library, 4th Floor, 301 Burnhamthorpe Rd. W., Mississauga. Tel: 905-615-4460. Email: mbec@mississauga.ca. Website: www.city.mississauga.on.ca
- **Business Advisory Centre Durham**, 50 Richmond St. E., Suite 109, Durham Region, Oshawa. Tel: 905-438-4008 or 1-800-632-5151. Email: cawalker@bacd.ca. Website: www.bacd.ca
- **Enterprise Toronto**: Free one-on-consultation is available but you must have a business plan to access this service. Email: enterprisetoronto@toronto.ca. Website: www.toronto.ca/enterprisetoronto
- **North York Civic Centre**, Main Floor, 5100 Yonge St., North York. Tel: 416-395-7434.
- **Scarborough**, 150 Borough Dr., 1st Floor, Scarborough. Tel: 416-396-7169.
- **Downtown**, City Hall, 100 Queen St. W., Toronto. Tel: 416-396-5243.
- **Ontario Ministry of Government Services**, 375 University Ave., 2nd Floor, Toronto. The Ministry of Government Services offers business registration services for sole proprietorships and general partnerships. Tel: 416-314-8880. Website: www.registerbusinessinontario.com

There is a fee to register your business or conduct a name search on your proposed business name. **A business registration must be renewed again after five years.** The government does not send reminder notices.

How do you obtain an HST number?

Most businesses are required to collect the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). If you are registered as a sole proprietor or general partnership, you can obtain an HST number by calling or visiting a Revenue Canada office (<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca>). A list of offices within the GTA and hours of operation on the website, along with a checklist outlining the information you need to register your HST account. It also allows you to register online through the Business Registration Online.

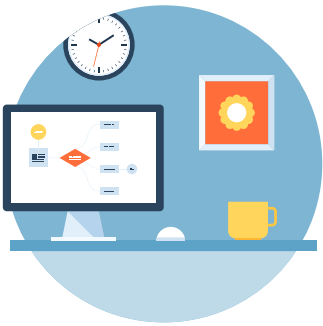
When you register for your HST number, you will be assigned a Business Number (BN), not to be confused with the Business Identification Number (BIN) you receive when you register your business.

Web resources:

- [The Canada-Ontario Business Centre](#) offers a guide called *Starting a Home-Based Business: A Manual for Success*. The guide is packed with useful information on everything from measuring your entrepreneurial spirit to preparing an income statement. It also includes a guide on *How to Start A Consulting Business in Ontario*. This site also offers a list of online resources available to help women start their own business.
- [HSBC Bank Canada](#) offers a self-assessment tool in its *Small Business* section, to help you identify whether being your own boss is right for you.
- [Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship](#). Includes a resource called *Your Guide to Small Business*, with chapters on sole proprietorship, partnership and incorporation, choosing your business name, and a business planning guide.
- [Service Canada](#). In the *Training & Careers* section of the website, you will find a section on self-employment that includes a self-employment quiz, a self-assessment questionnaire, pros and cons of working for yourself, and myths and realities about running your own business.

- [OCRI – The Entrepreneurship Centre](#) (Ottawa). Features a variety of resources for starting your own business.
- [The Business Development Bank of Canada](#). Features a business plan template, an online entrepreneurial self-assessment tool, and a step-by-step guide to starting your own business.
- [Business Start-Up Assistant](#). This site provides reliable information on market research, business name and structure, preparing a business plan, and financing.
- [CanadaOne](#) features 900+ small business how-to articles plus several business tools, including a strategic marketing plan builder, a search engine submission tool, and several business guides including a small business money guide, starting a business guide, marketing guide, and a step-by-step guide to registering and setting up a domain name.
- [SmallbizXpress – Toronto Public Library](#). Your guide to small business information on the web for Ontario – everything you need for starting, running, and expanding your business.
- [The Entrepreneur's Help Page](#) contains multiple resources for entrepreneurs, including articles on business start-ups, business plans, marketing, office planning, technology needs of a start-up, etc.
- ***The Successful Communication Consultant*** by Corinne Laboissiere, ABC, APR (available through the [Toronto Public Library](#)).

2. Setting Up Your Office



Setting up and properly managing your home office is critical to making your new business work for you.

Introduction

Now that you've selected your business name, registered your business and set-up your HST account, what's next?

If you're planning to work out of a home office, carefully consider the location:

- If you have dogs or children, does your office have a door that you can close for privacy when you're talking on the phone or participating in a conference call?
- Do you have room for a computer as well as adjacent workspace?
- What equipment will you need and where will it will go?
- Do you have enough electrical outlets in the office space to handle the equipment?
- Will you be inviting clients to your office any time, and if so, do you have space to hold a meeting?
- Can you control the temperature of your office space?
- Do you need an office phone number that is separate from your home phone number?

Setting up and properly managing your home office is critical to making your new business work for you. Here's a checklist of things to consider when setting up your home office:

Equipment

- Telephone or cellphone with voicemail. Does it have speakerphone capability? Can you place someone on hold and take another call? Do you need a second handset elsewhere in the house? Do you need call display?
- Fax machine

- Computer: MAC or PC/desktop or laptop. What do most of your prospective clients use? What system will best match your needs as a consultant based on the services you will be offering? Will you need a portable system to accommodate presentations to clients?
- Scanner
- Back-up hard drive (always back-up precious client information – computer crashes, theft, viruses, and damage happen, so be prepared)
- Shredder (do you want client documents or confidential business information going into the recycle bin?)
- Filing cabinet (be organized right from the start!)
- Printer/photocopier
- Internet connection
- DVDs/CD-ROMs

Consider leasing your equipment during the start-up phase of your business rather than buying it, particularly when it comes to computers. By leasing the equipment, you can more readily upgrade as the equipment evolves.

Communications

- Cellphone (do you want clients to be able to reach you when you are out of your office?)
- Tablet or other PDA (will you need access to your e-mails when visiting clients?)
- Skype software to allow you to call anyone in the world who is also on Skype, for free
- Headset (will you be doing podcasting? Do you need to have your hands free while taking a conference call?)
- Webcam/videoconferencing capability if needed
- Email (will you use your personal email address for your business or will you set up a separate business email? Is the provider you currently use for your personal email reliable or are the servers frequently down? Will you be handling large files and if so, can your provider offer you the capacity you will need to receive and send the documents?)
- Website (Will you be hosting podcasts or a blog on your website? Will you need e-commerce?)

Stationery

- Will you be creating a visual identity for your new business? If you're considering a visual identity, hire a professional to create it for you.
- Letterhead
- Invoices
- Business cards
- Envelopes
- Labels
- Information kit folders

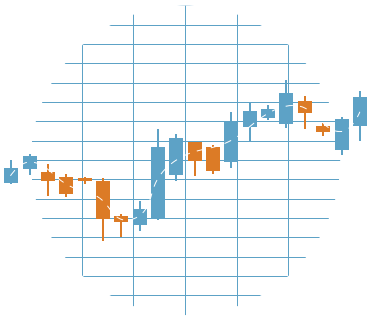
Mail delivery

Do you want to use your home address as your mailing address for any work-related mail deliveries? Are you comfortable using this on your letterhead and business cards? Are you expecting to host client meetings in your home office? Are you okay with a client 'stopping in' to drop something off? If not, you may wish to consider using a P.O. box number for your mailing address instead. These are available through your local post office for a nominal fee.

Web resources

- [ConsultantJournal](#) contains tips for consultants who work from home on how to set up your home office so that it functionally meets your needs.
- [Seven Rules in Setting Up Your Home Office](#) features several articles devoted to setting up a home office, including 10 Common Home Office Mistakes, Proven Principles in Creating a Home Office, Setting Up a Home Office for Multiple Users, and Tips to Organizing Your Home Office.
- [ErgoPrime Article: Planning Your Home Office](#).

3 Managing Your Finances



While we'd like to think we'll be busy five days a week, 52 weeks a year, the reality is that independent life can be unpredictable.

Introduction

One of the realities of working as an independent is preparing for the inevitable ebbs and flows in client volume. You might think you'll be busy five days a week, 52 weeks a year, but the reality is that independent life can be unpredictable. You can be overwhelmingly busy one month, and find business slow the next. Sound financial planning will help you handle these peaks and valleys. This chapter contains information on how to:

- Find the right accountant
- Open a business account at your local bank
- Set aside money for income tax and HST and/or GST
- Develop a system for tracking your finances

Find an accountant you're comfortable with

If you don't already have an accountant, now is the time to find one. An accountant can help you better understand the tax advantages available to you as an independent consultant and help you keep track of your money by setting up a financial tracking system for you. It's important as you do business, to keep these in mind, so that you don't overlook opportunities to maximize your income.

Ask for recommendations from family, friends and business associates. Your lawyer or banker may also have a suggestion. Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario (<http://www.icao.on.ca>) also provides a directory of chartered accountants in the province, and lets you search by region so you can contact CAs in your area.



You'll need to open a business account at your local bank.

Before selecting an accountant, interview at least three to see which one best meets your needs. The Financial Planners Standards Council lists [10 questions you should ask a financial planner](#). These questions can easily be adapted to help you find a good accountant.

Open a business account

Whether you are a sole proprietor, have a partnership or are incorporated, you'll need to open a business account at your local bank. Things to consider:

- How much revenue do you expect to earn in the first year? How much revenue are you targeting each month?
- Will you need business cheques on your business account?
- Will you need a debit card on your business account?
- Do you want the flexibility of online banking?
- Do you want to be able to transfer money from your business account to a personal account?
- Do you want a business credit card?

Check the website of your local bank or credit union for information on its banking plans. The banks also often offer cash flow tools and advice on small business management.

It's a good idea to sit down with a representative from your bank to discuss the options available to you. Remember to bring a copy of your business registration information with you.

Set aside money for income tax and HST/GST

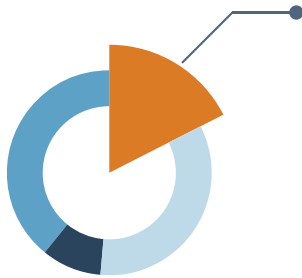
Moving from full or part-time employment to independent practice means that you no longer have automatic income tax deductions from your salary. This is important to keep in mind as you deposit payments for work you've completed. Be sure to set aside money for income tax and HST/GST.

In your first two years as an independent, the government does not require you to pay quarterly instalments on your income tax. Rather, you can pay any income tax owing when you file your taxes. All the more reason, then, to ensure you've maintained the appropriate percentage of your income for paying taxes and HST/GST.

Talk to your accountant about how you can best handle your finances to ensure you're not short of money when it comes to paying your taxes.

Revenue Canada provides online services for HST/GST registrants, including:

- paying the tax
- searching for the status of a payment
- reviewing interest charged or paid
- transferring a credit to other accounts
- providing account statements, such as a statement of arrears and/or a statement of interim payments
- getting copies of previously issued notices or statements
- changing some of the communication instructions on your account, such as stopping certain statements or the return envelope with your remittance voucher



Be sure to set aside money for income tax and HST/GST.

The website breaks down information on HST/GST by the type of business you have (i.e., sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation). It also includes information on filing your HST/GST returns and provides access to the forms online. To find out more about HST/GST registration and filing, [Revenue Canada](#).

Develop a system for tracking your finances

You've just completed your first assignment for a client. How are you going to invoice that client? How are you going to track that invoice and payment when it comes in? How are you going to track your expenses as a business against the revenue you are generating? If you're not familiar with keeping financial records, talk to your accountant about a simple, straightforward method for tracking your business finances.

The invoice

Some things to keep in mind when you're preparing your client's invoice:

- Does the invoice have your company name, address, phone and fax numbers on it?
- Does the invoice have a place to add HST/GST? Is your HST/GST number clearly identified on the invoice?
- Does the invoice clearly state what services the fee covers? Have any additional expenses been added to the invoice (e.g., parking, photocopying) and do you have the receipts for these expenses? (Remember: if the HST/GST is already included in the price of the expense, that expense should not be included when you are calculating your HST/GST amount).
- Have you stated a timeframe within which you expect the invoice to be paid?
- Does the invoice clearly state the name of the client and the client's address? Is the date the invoice was issued clearly stated?
- For financial tracking purposes, have you assigned a number to the invoice? (This is particularly useful if you are following up with an organization's Accounts Payable department regarding an overdue payment.)
- Is to the payment recipient clearly stated on the invoice?
- How often will you invoice a client during a long-term assignment? It could be bi-weekly, monthly, upon completion of assignment, half up front/half when completed. Spell it out.

According to research done by the [FreshBooks](#) cloud accounting service, how you word your invoice can help you get paid faster. Here's what to say:

- A polite *Please pay this invoice within X days* or *Thank you for your business* can get you paid faster.
- Saying *21 days to pay* gets you paid more often and faster than using *net 21* (may be confusing) or *upon receipt* (interpreted as *whenever you feel like it*). Recommended language: *Thank you for your business. Please send payment within 21 days of receiving this invoice.*

- Threatening clients with interest on late payments ensures a higher percentage of invoices paid. Try *Thank you for your business. I expect payment within 21 days, so please process this invoice within that time. There will be a 1.5% interest charge per month on late invoices.*

Tracking payments

Create a system for tracking invoices and payments. Maintain a record (say, in a spreadsheet) of how much you've invoiced each month, and track incoming payments against your invoices to identify what's been paid and what hasn't. Mark paper copies of the invoice with the date a payment has been received, or staple the payment slip to the back of the invoice. This makes it easy to quickly identify which invoices haven't yet been paid. If you are maintaining a financial ledger, transfer this information to the ledger.

Keeping receipts

Discuss with your accountant what expenses you need to track. Any receipts you use in the course of conducting your business (gas, postage, parking, meals, office supplies, office equipment and so on) should be kept in a safe place. Most stationery stores carry special envelopes marked by month in which you can keep your receipts over the course of the year, or collect them in a file folder. If you have incurred expenses in the course of conducting business with a client, and have agreed in advance that these expenses will be billed as part of your invoice, remember to attach the receipts to the invoice before forwarding to your client.

Check with your accountant regarding startup expenses for your business. These may include office equipment (desk, bookshelves, filing cabinet, computer, printer, scanner, etc.), office supplies (paper, printer cartridges, letterhead, business cards, envelopes, pens, notepads, presentation folders, etc.), phone connections, Internet connections and more.

Other web resources

The [Government of Ontario](#) offers an online publication called Your Guide to Small Business, which features a section on income tax, HST/GST, business insurance and business records.

4. Setting Your Fees



*PIC's 2014
fee survey:
range from
\$45 to \$250 an hour,
with a median
of \$100.*

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges facing those new to independent practice is deciding how much you're going to charge your clients for your services. You don't want to price yourself out of the market, but at the same time, you don't want to undervalue what you do either.

What to charge

A good starting place for independents is [PIC's 2014 fee survey](#).

Here are some of the results:

- The rates on which we base our fees range from \$45 to \$250 an hour, with a median of \$100.
- Two-thirds of PIC respondents offer reduced rates (10% to 50% less) for long-term clients, extended projects, working on a retainer or as a single-client contractor.
- Nearly 43% of PIC respondents also charge lower fees for charities and non-profits, or use other methods of cutting these organizations a deal.
- Our years as a consultant ranges from less than a year to 30, with a median of 10. Our experience in communications range from four to 43 years, with a median of 20.

RGD, the Association of Registered Graphic Designers, shares the results of a 2012-2013 survey in [What Do Graphic Designers Charge?](#) The survey shows the average hourly rate for sole proprietors across Canada was \$74 per hour. The PDF also has advice on factors to consider when quoting.

Get a sense for what others are charging by talking to colleagues who are independents, offer similar services and cater to a similar demographic. This can help you better determine whether or not the fee you are considering is priced above, below or at the same market value. If you've recently left an organization that is within the market you are targeting, talk to someone you know in the company who can tell you what they currently pay for consultant services in your field.

Independents often **undervalue** their worth, particularly when they are first starting up their businesses. The fear of quoting a price that is higher than prospective clients are willing to pay frequently results in new independents quoting lower than their counterparts. Be comfortable with what you are charging based on research you've conducted before setting your fees.

The most important thing to remember when setting your fee is that it should reflect more than just the time you spent completing the assignment. Take into consideration the **value** of what you provide the client and **your overhead costs** as an independent practitioner (marketing/advertising your business, equipment and supply costs, professional development, etc.).

When confirming an assignment with a prospective client, don't forget to build in an agreement on **additional expenses** that will be covered by the client over and above your service fee. This may include things like expenses for parking, photocopying, printing, long distance phone calls, meals and so on, depending upon the nature of the assignment and what services you are providing. If you don't specifically outline what additional expenses should be included over and above your fee, the client may assume that these expenses are included in the fee you quoted.

How to charge

Independents can set their fees in a number of ways:

- by the project/assignment (recommended)
- by the hour (use this to determine a per-project fee)
- by the day
- on retainer

More on retainers



It's a good idea to draft a contract between yourself and the client that clearly outlines the expectations.

A retainer is a set fee charged for professional services and can be offered as an alternative to a client with whom you do regular business. The retainer usually reflects a monthly fee based on the anticipated number of hours of service that will be needed by the client. Commonly used in the legal profession, retainers are a deposit against which the fees are charged as they are earned.

If a client has agreed to a retainer fee for a monthly period and the time is not used, often the fee is non-refundable (i.e., you expect to be paid that month whether they used the complete allotted time for the retainer or not). If you wish to pursue a retainer arrangement with a client, ensure you have a contract that outlines whether or not the client is obligated to pay the full retainer amount if not all the time is used.

Likewise, if the amount of time a client needs your services surpasses the monthly time accounted for in the retainer, negotiate up front whether this time is logged within the following month or whether you can bill for additional time used beyond the time agreed to in the retainer.

Contracts

It's a good idea to draft a contract between yourself and the client that clearly outlines what the expectations are for completing the assignment.

The contract may include information such as:

- scope of the project
- specific tasks to be completed

- deadlines to be met
- commitment of both the consultant and the client
- expectations regarding regular progress updates
- payment fee (hourly, daily, project-based, retainer) and when it's due
- additional expenses
- intellectual property
- non-competitive agreements
- confidentiality agreements
- agreement as to what constitutes termination of the contract by either party
- signatures of both consultant and client

Tracking your time

Once you know how you're going to structure your fees, your next challenge is figuring out how to track your time. Some clients like to receive detailed accounts of the time spent on their project attached to your invoice. It's easy to get so caught up in your busy workday that you forget to track your time. This could lead to lost paid hours if you can't recall how much time you spent on what activity.

This becomes even more challenging if you are working on multiple projects at the same time. Be sure to settle on a time management and tracking system that works for you and for your clients. Whether that means tracking your time in 15-minute intervals, half-hour intervals or hour intervals, be consistent with your approach from one client to the next, and decide whether you will be using a manual or online tracking system, or a combination of both.

Web resources

There are a number of websites that provide independent practitioners with information on setting consulting fees.

Ilise Benun's [Marketing Mentor](#) site offers advice for creative businesses, including guides to pricing and marketing.

Ed Gandia's [High-Income Business Writing](#) blog includes a podcast on [How to Price Your Writing Projects](#) and a free pricing guide with rates.

Freelance writer **Paul Lima** is a great resource for advice on pricing your services, marketing your business, time management and more:

- See chapter 38 of his book, *Everything You Wanted to Know About Freelance Writing*.
- Check his blog [LINK TO <https://sixfigurefreelancer.wordpress.com/>] for other advice on [pricing](#), [writing](#), [publishing](#) and [how to find work](#)

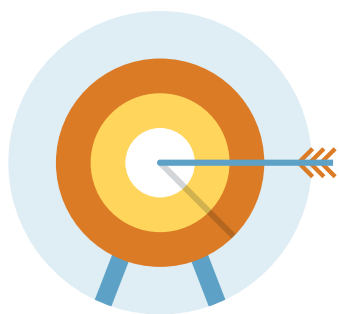
PIC member **Sue Horner** posted what she calls

“[The ultimate list of pricing resources for independents](#),” with advice on why and how to raise your rates, understanding your value and what to say when a client says your price is too high. Also see her recap of a [March 2015 PIC session](#) on pricing.

Consultant Journal – – This [website](#) features a blog with articles such as *What Consulting Fees Cover*, *Consulting Fee Rates* and *Sample Consulting Invoice for Consultants*.

The Copywriters Coach – Sales catalyst and copywriter's coach [Chris Marlow](#) sells access to a copywriter fee and compensation survey.

5. Marketing Your Services



How are you going to get your target market to see you as the preferred choice?

Introduction

Now that you've established your business, how are you going to attract clients? How much time and effort do you need to put into marketing your services? Does your financial plan include a budget for marketing your services? How are you going to brand *you*? How are you going to get your target market to see you as the *preferred choice*?

The marketing plan

Take the time from the get-go to develop a marketing plan for your new business. Once you have one, you'll be able to refine it over time, as you determine what works for you and what doesn't.

- **Define your niche.** If you were to give a 30-second elevator speech about what it is you do and what differentiates you from others offering similar services, what would you say? What services do you offer? What gap in service do you resolve in the marketplace? Does this market have growth potential?
- **Identify your ideal client market.** What do you know about your prospective clients and the industry they represent? What challenges do your clients face that you can offer a solution to? Is your client market willing to hire external consultants? Are they in a financial position to hire external consultants? What is the best medium for reaching your clients?
- **Describe your marketing objectives.** Is it to increase your client base? Is it to generate revenue? Make sure your objectives are measurable so that you can effectively evaluate the success of your marketing efforts and investment.

- **Marketing messages.** What is it that you want to convey to prospective clients about you, about the services you offer?
- **Marketing strategy.** How are you going to meet the objectives that you have set? How are you going to position yourself? Your services? What is it that you know about the prospective client(s) that will support you in making your services appealing to them?
- **Action plan.** What tactics are you going to use to reach your prospective client?
- **Budget.** What budget are you going to invest in your marketing plan?
- **Execution.** How are you going to go about executing the various tactics you've outlined in your plan?
- **Evaluation.** Don't forget to evaluate the effectiveness of your marketing efforts by reviewing your marketing objectives against your outcomes.

Networking

Not everyone is comfortable with networking, yet it can be one of the most powerful tools in your marketing toolkit. The opportunities to network are limitless.

Your Professional Independent Communicators (PIC) group is a perfect way to network with like-minded individuals who are already interested in independent practice. We offer the perfect venue for brushing up on your networking skills before you test them out on the client market. Networking through PIC can also lead to working together with other independents through joint RFPs or through subcontracting to meet a particular client's needs.

Take the time to explore networking opportunities in your area. These might be through professional associations like IABC and PIC or through other organizations like Toastmasters, boards of trade, volunteer positions (i.e. boards of directors, community events/committees), professional development seminars or conferences.

If you offer expertise in a particular area, consider making yourself available as a guest speaker at a service club, business association or community event where your audience may include prospective clients or those who are in a position to make referrals.

Websites

These days, prospective clients expect that you have a website, and think less of you if you don't. Research the websites of existing independents. How do they position their services? How can you differentiate yourself from others?

Think carefully about your domain name. Have you ever seen a website for an organization that doesn't reflect the company's name? Don't fall into the trap of using a catchy phrase for your domain name rather than your company's name. People looking for your website won't be looking for *thewrittenword.com* if your company name is *Joe Brown Communications*. Large corporations and banks are good examples of organizations that know the importance of carrying a domain name that reflects the legal name of the company.

How to market yourself with social media

Independents need a vibrant personal brand, clear business goals, a marketing strategy and a process for producing and sharing great content via social media.

It all starts with goals and strategy. You need to know who you are trying to reach, what you want to accomplish, and how you will measure success. With a clear strategy in hand, you can then pick your tactics, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or Pinterest. Fill out your profile details to reflect your strategy, and be sure to use a clear, professional photo. (Check the PIC member list for photographers.)

*Collaboration tips:
Try as you might,
you can't do it
all yourself.*

Five things I learned about COLLABORATION



Try as you might, you can't do it all yourself.
Collaborate your way to success with these key tips.

“Only work with people you like.”

Legendary graphic designer Milton Glaser discovered that all the work he had done that was meaningful and significant came out of an affectionate relationship with a client. Not just professionalism, but true affection for someone who shares some common ground.

FEAST or famine



Having no work is just as stressful as having too much. You need to deftly find your sweet spot where you can nicely manage your workload and keep your clients delighted.

Role clarity is FAB



The perfect collaboration is a band of experts who bring skills that complement one another – not four Ringos fighting over who's going to do the drum solo.

LET'S TALK



Find the social media tools that you enjoy the most, and then use them to connect with your “tribes,” the communities where you feel totally at home.

PROTECT yourself

Collaboration is an exercise in risk management. When you begin a relationship, you need decide whether you need a maximum security fence of contracts and non-disclosure agreements or a simple little picket fence you both put your signature on.



Can we help?

Alix Edmiston
Digital PR advisor
@Alixed

Deana De Ciccio
Graphic designer
@Deanadc



Greg Ioannou
Book publisher
@GregIoannou

Avery Swartz
Web designer
@Averyswartz

Sources: inc.com, miltonglaser.com | Photo attribution: designerspics.com | Indie font: Before Breakfast, simonstratford.com

Whichever social media arrows you pack into your quiver, you need to also think about content marketing. Content marketing helps you answer the question: WHAT am I going to SAY on my social media accounts?

Content marketing includes the creation, curation and publication of relevant, valuable material that attracts and engages a clearly defined audience. It's not about you and it's not sales-y.

Together, content marketing and social media can help you to get known as an expert in your niche, build relationships with influencers, expand your connections online and off, and grow your list of potential clients.

If you're not sure where to start, you can begin by finding great content online and sharing it. Look for interesting stories on news sites, industry blogs, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and via Google Alerts. Then share this content on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram, Buffer, Paper.li and other outlets. It takes a while to start thinking like a publisher, but soon it will become second nature.



Say yes to blogging

Your blog and website should be the linchpin of your social media efforts. A blog is the easiest way to share content, including multimedia. At the same time, a frequently updated blog will increase your search engine optimization (SEO) and position you as a leader in your field. In many ways, a blog is key to getting known and getting remembered.

The best bloggers publish consistently, especially when launching a new blog. Be sure to write for humans, but keep SEO and keywords in mind. Use photos, graphics and multimedia to attract readers and encourage sharing. To keep readers engaged, make it easy to subscribe to your blog and share your content.

Boost your online productivity

Some indies fear they'll get sucked into social media and spend way too much time on it, and not enough time generating revenue. Here is a suggested workflow to avoid falling down the social media rabbit hole:

- Scan RSS feeds (using Feedly) and Google Alerts in the morning, along with your Twitter feed. Use Hootsuite or TweetDeck to organize Twitter into columns based on hashtags, persistent searches and lists.
- Schedule tweets and other content to be published throughout the day. Be careful about over-automating.
- Engage with others on social media, possibly during quick breaks throughout the day.
- Regularly evaluate what you're doing. Keep what works.

Whatever you do, design a routine that fits you and your business.

Over time, you'll find that the smart use of social media and content marketing will help you grow your independent business. You might even enjoy it!

Marketing collateral

Don't underestimate the promotional value of stationery. Yes, you still need a business card! Make sure your business cards, letterhead, envelopes and invoices all carry your contact information, your visual identity (if you have one), and your website. Are there other pieces that you need to reach your prospective clients (i.e., postcards, brochures)? Keep in mind that the professionalism of the printed piece is a direct reflection of the quality of the service you provide, so consider hiring a consultant to design your materials if you plan to go this route.

Adding value

How can you add value? Among the greatest tools now being used in the online world are freebies. These allow you as an independent to offer your insight, expertise and practical tips by way of free reports, templates,

workshops, webinars, podcasts, blogs or other giveaways. It's a way of bringing people to your site, and of positioning yourself as an expert. If people find value in the services/offerings you provide free of charge, imagine how they would perceive anything for which you charge a fee – must be great, right? For many, this approach can lead to new contacts and referrals.

Advertising

As a member of PIC, you can place a business-card-sized advertisement on IABC/Toronto's online [Marketplace](#) at a discounted rate. . To book your listing or find out more, visit [Marketplace](#).

Web resources

- **About.com** – [Ten Low-Cost Ways to Promote Your Business](#)
- **Guru.com** – <http://www.guru.com> – The world's largest online marketplace for freelance talent, connecting freelancers and consultants with contract projects.
- How to use social media to find clients and build relationships recaps an [October 2014 PIC session](#)
- **Solo-e.com** – <http://www.solo-e.com> – An online learning and connection community dedicated to lifestyle-inspired solo entrepreneurs. Includes a variety of articles as well as templates/tools to help you run your independent practice.
- **Zeromillion.com** – <http://www.zeromillion.com> – Contains a library of articles on marketing, entrepreneurship, personal development, and web marketing.
- **Website Tips** – <http://www.websitetips.com> – An educational website design and development resource for anyone wanting to learn about websites. Includes 2,400 annotated resources.

6 More Resources



General resources

- **The Buzz**, PIC's monthly newsletter, shares event recaps, member profiles and more. [Find back issues here](#).
- **Canada Business Network** – www.canadabusiness.ca/eng/ – Business plan guides and templates, checklists for going into business, home-based business, naming your business, business planning & start-up.
- **Canada Revenue Agency** – www.ccr-aadrc.gc.ca – HST/GST, business registration, types of business (i.e. sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation), keeping records.
- Entrepreneurship.com <http://www.entrepreneurship.com/archive/> podcasts air interviews with entrepreneurs and mentors.
- IABC/Ottawa's podcast, The Voice, has a series on "going indie" with host Tina Barton:
 - Episode 1, [How to Become an 'Indie' Communications Consultant](#) (featuring PIC's Sohini Bhattacharya and IABC/Montreal's Deborah Hinton)
 - Episode 2, [How to Position Yourself and Build a Client Base](#) (featuring IABC/Ottawa's Ken Anderson and Kerry Mortimer)
 - Episode 3, [How to Pitch Prospects and Formalize Agreements](#) (featuring PIC's Donna Papacosta and IABC/Newfoundland and Labrador's Martha Muzychka)
- **Industry Canada** – www.strategis.ic.gc.ca – Canada's business and consumer site. Contains guides on starting a business and financing.
- **Michael J. Katz** specializes in helping solo professionals get better clients more easily. Check his site for [recommended services](#) and helpful articles on [growing your business](#), [simplifying your marketing](#) and more.

- **Paul Lima** – Freelance writer, trainer and author Paul Lima's [website](#) includes posts on accurately quoting, setting a corporate writing rate and other excerpts from his book, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Freelance Writing*.
- **Prosperity Coaching** – www.prosperitycoaching.biz/articles-index.html – Articles on marketing, networking, elevator speeches and more.
- **SMBReviews.com** – <http://smbreviews.com/> – Small and home-based business links, including a library of articles.
- **Street Smart Marketer** – Download *The Top 6 Best Internet Marketing Strategies* eBook here: www.streetsmartmarketer.com/downloads/eReport.pdf. Tips include how to research your target market, how to bring that target market to your site, how to keep them on your site and how to sell them something.

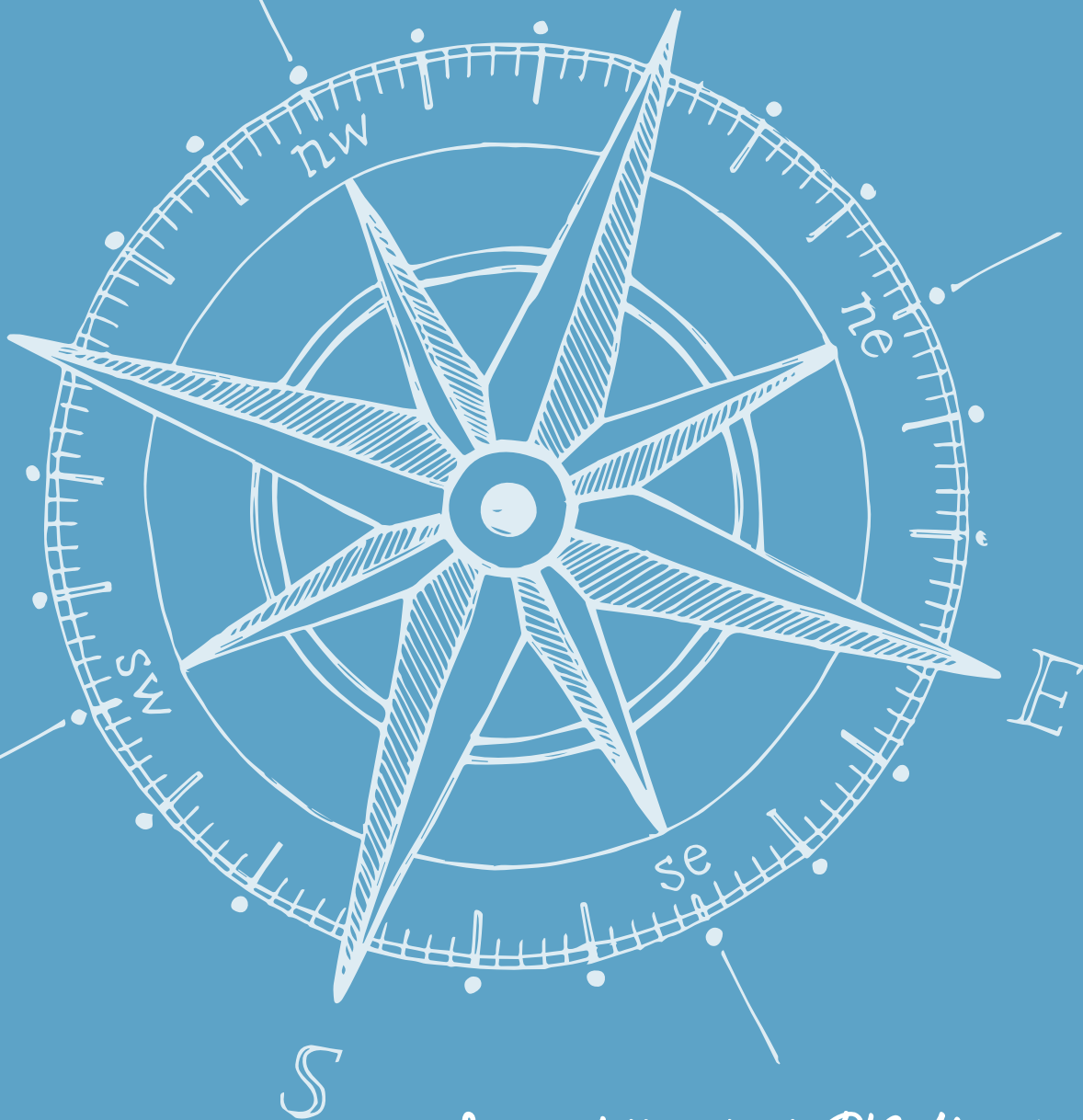
Online resources for women



Professional development opportunities on a variety of topics related to women in business.

- **Canada Business Ontario's Women in Business Guide** – www.cbo-eco.ca/en/index.cfm/starting/getting-started/women-in-business-guide. This guide highlights resources and websites specific to meeting the needs of women entrepreneurs in Ontario, including a comprehensive listing of associations targeted to businesswomen.
- **Canadian Association for Women Executives & Entrepreneurs** – www.cawee.net – Empowers women in the development and advancement of their professional lives, fostering financial independence, professional development and personal satisfaction.
- **Company of Women** – www.companyofwomen.ca – Provides women entrepreneurs with an opportunity to network, promote their businesses and access resources/professional development opportunities on a variety of topics related to women in business.
- **GroYourBiz.com** – <http://groyourbiz.com/> – Provides monthly support meetings, a practical approach training guide and an alliance of organizations to help women entrepreneurs who want to take their business to the next level.
- **WBE Canada** – <http://www.wbecanada.org/> – Provides programs and services to help WBEs (Women's Business Enterprises) access business opportunities with major corporations

- **Womanowned.com – Business Networks for Women –**
www.womanowned.com – Provides information, tools and networking opportunities for woman starting or growing their own business. Includes a vast library of articles.



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