



How Freelancers Market Their Services: 2023 Survey **RESULTS REPORT**



Introduction

How Freelancers Market their Services: 2023 Survey, fielded from May 2-17, 2023, asked freelancers about what works best for them in marketing their businesses, the challenges they face, their use of social media for business, membership in professional associations, and more. Highlights of key survey findings start on page 3, followed by results for the main questions. I thank the 212 freelancers who took the survey.

How Will the Survey Results Help You?

If you're like most freelancers, you're smart and you're talented. But you're not getting the clients you deserve. And building a stable, high-income freelance business is a struggle.

This isn't your fault.

You probably never had a chance to learn about freelance marketing.

That's where the survey results can help.

The results clearly show that some types of marketing work better than others in helping freelancers build stable, successful freelance businesses. Compare what you're doing now to what other freelancers are doing. Then set a course to improve your marketing approach, and ultimately, your results!

Who Conducted the Survey?

I'm Lori De Milto, a freelance writer and founder of [The Mighty Marketer](#). I help freelancers get the clients they deserve by focusing on what works best, so you don't without waste time or money.

Every freelancer can become a Mighty Marketer. See the end of the report for links to free content and tools on freelance marketing to help you do this.

Highlights of Key Findings

93% of freelancers who took the survey find marketing to be a challenge:

- “Biggest challenge”: 25% of freelancers
- “One of the major challenges”: 30% of freelancers
- “Somewhat of a challenge”: 27% of freelancers
- “Minor challenge”: 12% of freelancers.

Only 6% of freelancers said marketing is not a challenge.

The top 3 marketing challenges are:

1. Making time for marketing
2. Understanding how and where to get better clients
3. Finding clients to market to.

Networking is the #1 source of the best clients for freelancers. Other top sources of the best clients are LinkedIn and direct email.

Most freelancers are already using some of the most effective marketing tools:

- 79% of freelancers have a specialty.
- 95% of freelancers have a LinkedIn profile.
- 70% of freelancers have a website for their freelance business.

72% of freelancers use social networks for business. LinkedIn is the #1 social network:

- 91% of freelancers who use social networks for business use LinkedIn.
- 61% of freelancers who use LinkedIn say it’s “important” or “very important” in getting clients.

96% of freelancers belong to professional associations. Of the freelancers who belong to professional associations:

- 59% of freelancers say professional associations are “important” or “very important” in getting clients.

Few freelancers are taking full advantage of referrals, one of the easiest ways to get great clients:

- **Just 31% of freelancers get at least 51% of their business from referrals.**
- 43% of freelancers get less than 25% of their business from referrals.

Many freelancers are getting much of their business from repeat business from satisfied clients:

- **73% of freelancers get at least 51% of their business from satisfied clients.**
- Just 12% of freelancers get less than 25% of their business from satisfied clients.

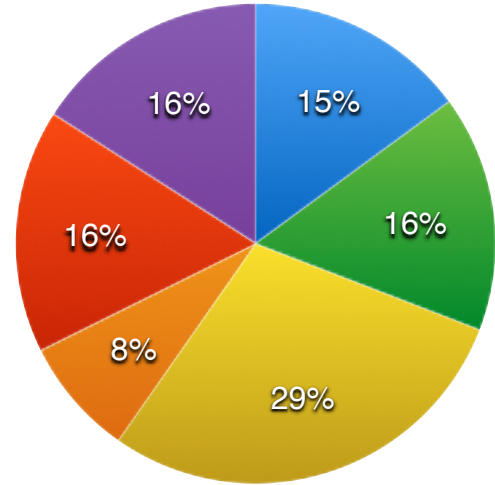
Many freelancers are optimistic about the future:

- 61% of freelancers are “optimistic” or “very optimistic” about their futures as freelancers.
- Just 3.1% of freelancers are “not at all optimistic.”

Survey Participants

Years of Freelance Experience*

Survey respondents are a mix of new and experienced freelancers. Freelancers with 4 to 9 years of experience (37%) were the largest group, followed by freelancers with 10+ years of experience (32%) were the largest group, followed by freelancers with 4 to 9 years of experience (37%) and freelancers with 3 years of experience or less (25%). Eight respondents weren't freelancing yet.



* 212 responses

The Numbers*

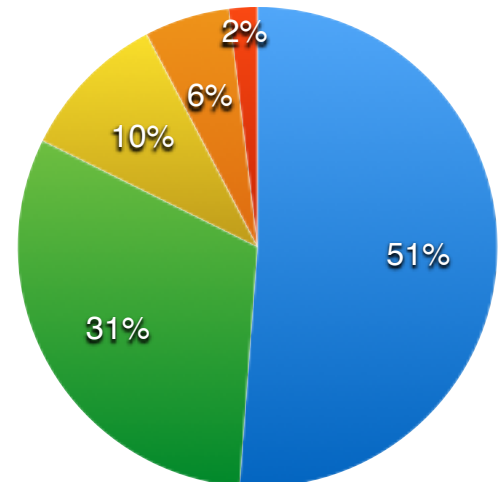
Not yet a freelancer	8
Less than 1 year	30
1-3 years	32
4-6 years	60
7-9 years	16
10-19 years	34
20 or more years	32



* 212 responses

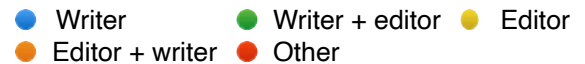
Types of Freelancers

83% of the survey respondents were writers or writers and editors. The next largest group, at 15%, was editors and editors and writers. About 2% of the freelancers work in other fields.



The Numbers*

Writer	110
Writer + editor	65
Editor	21
Editor + writer	12
Other	4



* 212 responses

Marketing Challenges

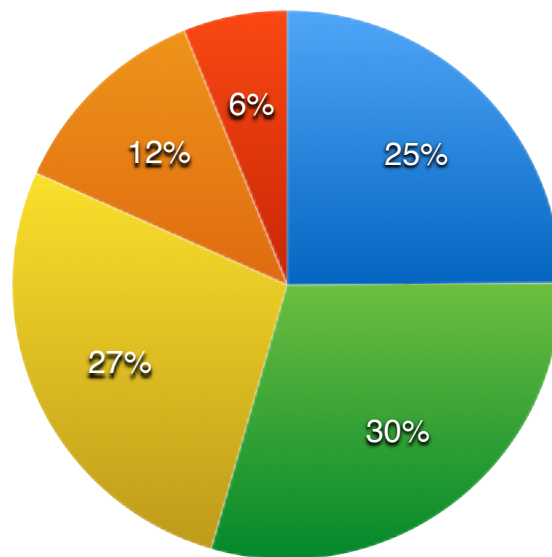
93% of freelancers who took the survey find marketing to be a challenge:

- 25% of freelancers: “Biggest challenge” (52 freelancers)
- 30% of freelancers: “One of the major challenges” (62 freelancers)
- 27% of freelancers: “Somewhat of a challenge” (58 freelancers)
- 12% of freelancers: “Minor challenge” (26 freelancers)

Only 6% of freelancers (14) said marketing is not a challenge.

* 212 responses

How Challenging is Marketing?



- Biggest challenge
- Somewhat of a challenge
- Not a challenge
- A major challenge
- Minor challenge

Top Marketing Challenges

The top 3 marketing challenges are:*

1. Making time for marketing.
2. Understanding how and where to get better clients
3. Finding clients to market to.

Understanding how and where to get better clients and making time for marketing were nearly tied for the top challenge.

These were the same top 3 challenges as in the 2021 and 2019 surveys. In 2021, making time for marketing and understanding how and where to get better clients were nearly tied for the top challenge. In 2019, finding clients to market to was #2 and making time for marketing was #3.

* 208 responses



* Ranked #1, #2, or #3

Sources of the Best Clients

The top 3 sources of the best clients are:*

1. Networking
2. LinkedIn
3. Direct email

Networking and LinkedIn were ranked much higher than direct email or other sources. More freelancers said networking was a top source of their best clients in 2023 than in 2021 or 2019. LinkedIn was slightly less of a top source in 2023 than in 2021 but much more of a top source than in 2019.

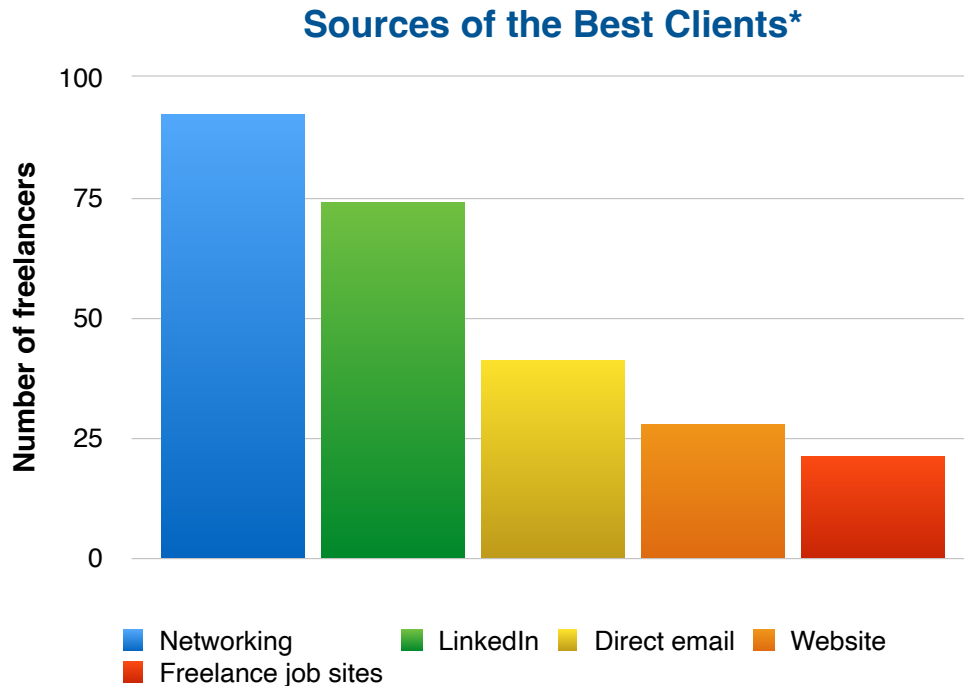
Networking (ranked #1, #2, or #3):

- 2023: 88%
- 2021: 83%
- 2019: 75%

LinkedIn (ranked #1, #2, or #3):

- 2023: 71%
- 2021: 76%
- 2019: 52.2%

* 208 responses



* Ranked #1, #2, or #3

Specialty (or Niche)

79% of freelancers (168) have a specialty (or niche). 21% of freelancers (44) do not have a specialty. This was very similar to 2021 and 2019:

- 2021: 76% of freelancers had a specialty
- 2019: 77% of freelancers had a specialty.

** 212 responses*

LinkedIn Profiles

95% of freelancers (202) have a LinkedIn profile. Just 5% of freelancers (10) do not have a LinkedIn profile.* This was a slight decrease from 2021 and a big increase from 2019:

- 2021: 98%
- 2019: 75%.

** 212 responses*

Websites

70% of freelancers (148) have a website for their freelance business and 30% of freelancers (64) do not have a website.* This was the same as 2021 and down slightly from 2019:

- 2021: 70%
- 2019: 75%.

** 212 responses*

Use of Social Networks for Business

72% of freelancers (152) use social networks for business and 28% (60) do not.* This was lower than in 2021 and 2019:

- 2021: 84%
- 2019: 75%

The top 3 social networks used were LinkedIn (by far the top social network), Twitter, and Facebook:

1. LinkedIn: 91% of freelancers
2. Twitter: 11% of freelancers
3. Facebook: 15% of freelancers.

** 212 responses*

Importance of Social Networks in Getting Clients

In helping freelancers get clients, LinkedIn was by far the most important social network:*

- 61% of freelancers (126 freelancers) said LinkedIn is “important” or “very important” in getting clients.

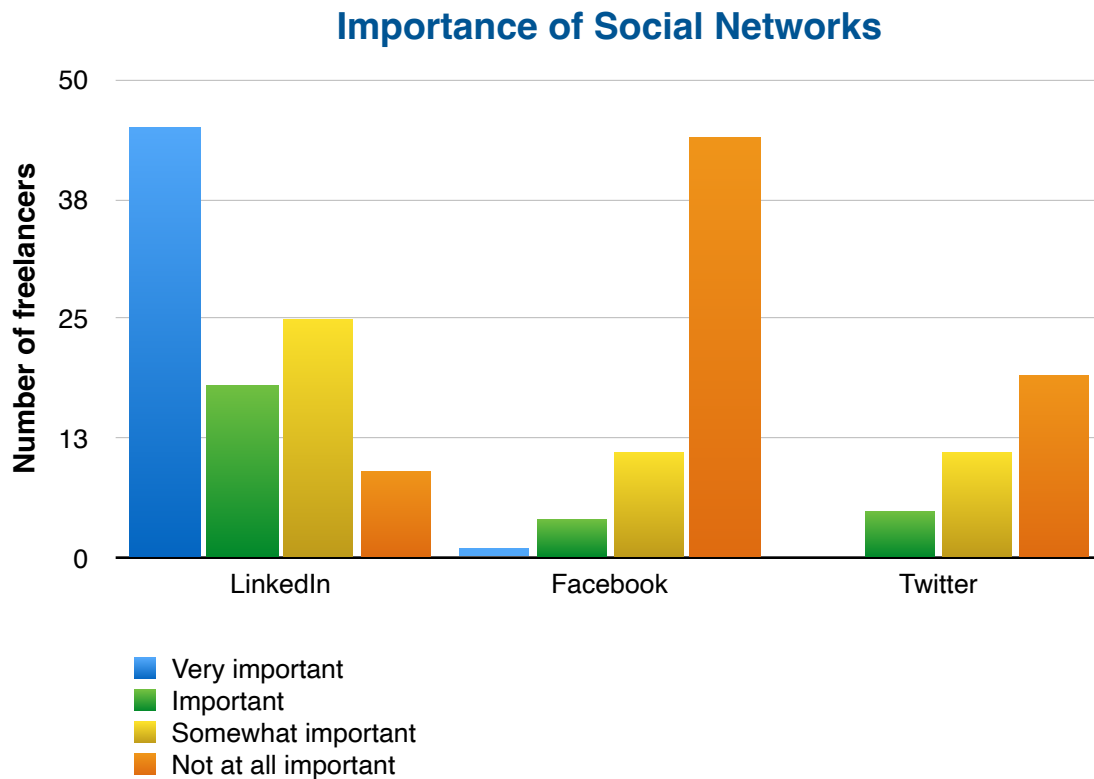
This was slightly lower than 2021 and about the same as in 2019:

- 2021: 68%
- 2019: 62%

Also rated as “important” or “very important” in getting clients were:

- Facebook: 4.9% of freelancers (10 freelancers)
- Twitter: 4.9% of freelancers (10 freelancers).

* 206 respondents



Professional Associations

96% of freelancers (192) belong to professional associations and 4% (14) do not.* This is an increase from 2021 and 2019:

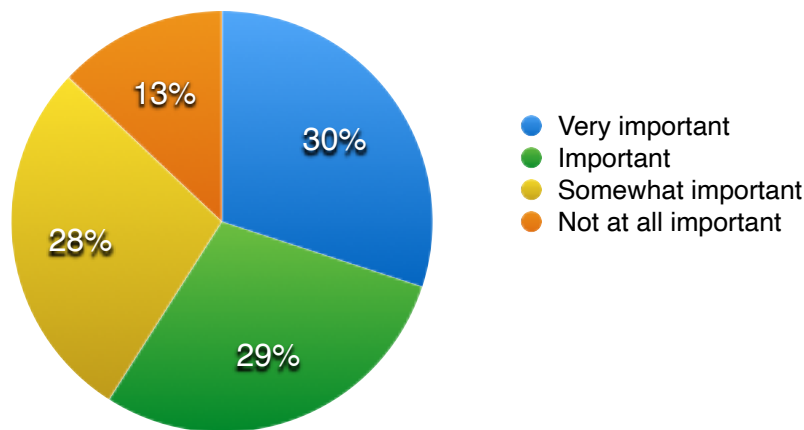
- 2021: 91%
- 2019: 86%

* 206 respondents

Professional Associations and Getting Clients

59% of freelancers (118) who belong to professional associations say that they're "important" or "very important" in helping them get clients.* 41% of freelancers (80) say professional associations are "not at all important" in helping them get clients.

* 198 respondents



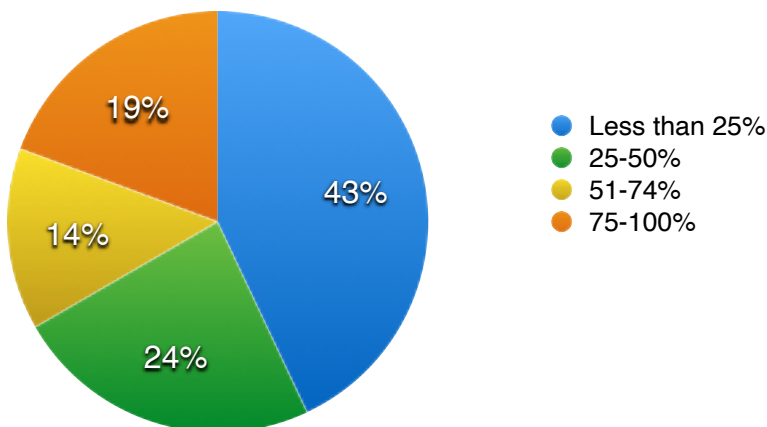
Referrals

Just 31% of freelancers (62) get at least 51% of their business from referrals. This is a big decrease from 2021 and 2019:

- 2021: 41%
- 2019: 42%

43% (87) get less than 25% of their business from referrals, nearly identical to 42% in 2019.

* 206 respondents



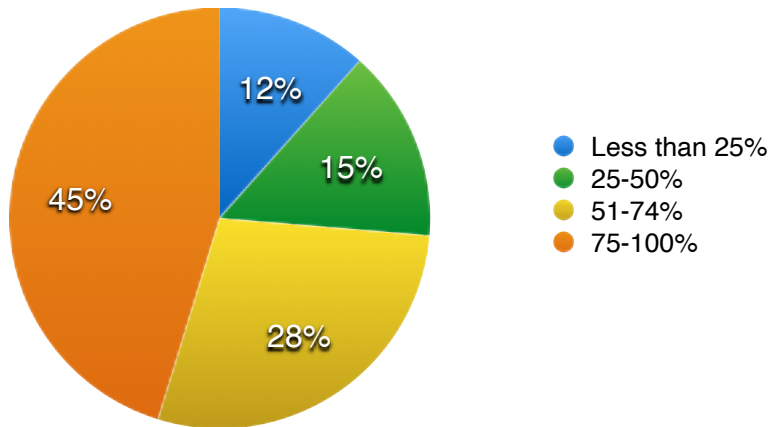
Repeat Business from Clients

73% of freelancers (140) get at least 51% of their business from repeat business from clients.* This is a decrease from 2021 and 2019:

- 2021: 79%
- 2019: 75%.

Just 12% of freelancers (24) get less than 25% of their business from repeat business.

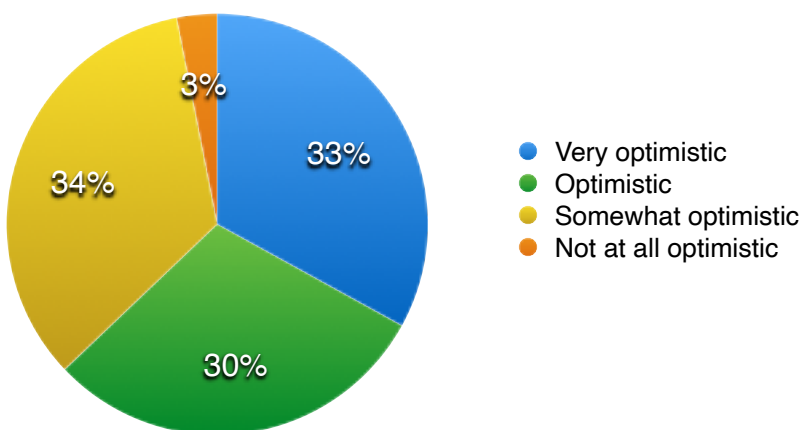
* 192 respondents



Optimism About the Future

63% of freelancers (120) are “optimistic” or “somewhat optimistic” about their freelance future. Just 3.1% are “not at all optimistic.”*

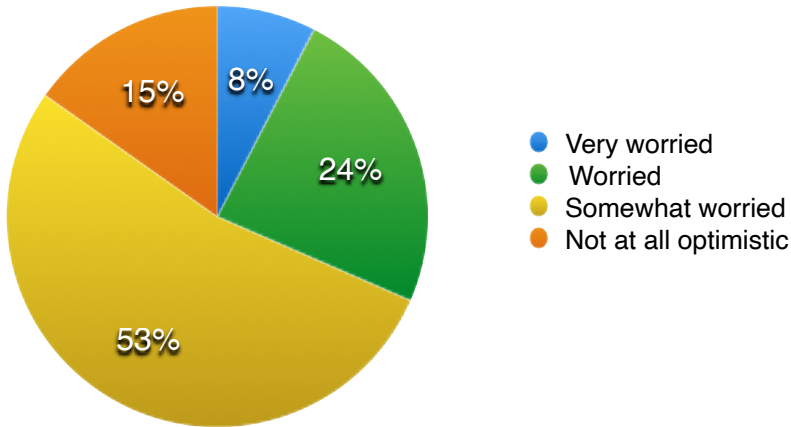
* 192 respondents



Worry About the Economy

30% of freelancers (58) are “very worried” or “worried” about the economy. Just 14.6% are “not at all optimistic.”*

* 192 respondents



What Freelancers Want to Learn

The top 3 marketing tools freelancers most want to learn about are:*

1. Marketing plan
2. LinkedIn
3. Direct email.

* 178 responses



Free Content and Tools on Freelance Marketing

Use my free content and tools to help you get the steady, high-paying clients you deserve and build a stable, successful freelance business.

The Ultimate Guide to the Freelance Success You Deserve

A proven step-by-step process that's helped hundreds of freelancers build their confidence and their income. Get your [free guide](#).

LinkedIn

The Ultimate Guide to LinkedIn for Freelancers. Get your [free guide](#).

[The Ultimate LinkedIn Profile for Freelance Success This Year](#)

[10 Ways to Get 500+ Connections on LinkedIn Fast](#)

[How to Increase Your Visibility on LinkedIn](#)

Direct email

[How to Get Steady, High-Paying Clients with Direct Email](#)

[Direct Email Swipe File](#), a collection of proven templates and examples

Freelance Success Blog

Practical advice and inspiration on marketing and freelance success stories. Many posts include free tools. Visit the [Freelance Success blog](#).

An Easier Way to Build Your Freelance Business

The easiest way to get the high-paying freelance work you deserve and build a stable, successful freelance business is to take my 7-week online course, [Finding the Freelance Clients You Deserve](#).

In the coaching version, you get personal guidance from me, based on your business goals and challenges. I review your marketing and key course assignments. My students tell me that coaching helps them build their confidence and succeed faster.

The course is also available as self-study. This is best if you're an experienced freelancer who is doing okay but you know you could be doing better.

