



Handbook for the Creation of the Freelancer Incubator Model



Co-funded by
the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of contents

Chapter 1 – Analysis of entrepreneurial skills for Freelancers	4
Introduction.....	5
Relevant soft skills identified through the research and the Transnational Report	8
Analytical and critical thinking	8
Active Learning and Learning Strategies	9
Problem-solving.....	10
Creativity.....	11
Leadership and Social Influence.....	12
Digital Skills.....	13
Monitoring and Control	14
Resilience, Stress Management and Flexibility	15
Conclusion	16
Chapter 2 – Incubator analysis	18
Introduction.....	19
Clarifying the Essence of an Incubator	19
Themes of Incubation	19
Private vs. Public Incubators.....	20
Incubator vs. Accelerator: A Distinction	20
Census of Incubators	22
Final Thoughts and Conclusions	32
Relevant Features for Developing a Freelancers' Incubator.....	33
Chapter 3 - Best practices of training for entrepreneurs and freelancers	35
Introduction.....	36
Best practices' collection	37
BELGIUM.....	38
ITALY	39
POLAND	45
SPAIN	47
Conclusion	53
Chapter 4 - The Business Model for the Freelance Incubator	54
Introduction.....	55
The Business Model Canvas.....	56
The Customer segments.....	57

The Value Proposition	65
The proposed product.....	67
The added value of training.....	69
Networking, mentoring, exchange of skills and experiences.....	70
Chapter 5 – Key partners, Key Activities, Key Resources	71
Introduction.....	72
Key partners for a freelancer's incubator	74
Key activities for a freelancer's incubator	75
Key resources and time management for a freelancer's digital incubator.....	76
Conclusions.....	77
Chapter 6 - Customer relationships and channels.....	79
Introduction.....	80
Customer relationships that are activated through the DIGIfreelancer project	80
Channels.....	82
Conclusion	85
Chapter 7 – Cost structure and revenue streams	87
Introduction: Why it is crucial to talk about costs and revenue	88
Cost structure.....	90
Revenue Streams.....	94
Conclusion	97
References	99

Chapter 1 – Analysis of entrepreneurial skills for Freelancers



Source: Image by vectorjuice on Freepik (<https://bit.ly/4a00Pkf>)

Introduction

In the world of professional development and career growth, two types of skills play a vital role: soft skills and hard skills. Although both are necessary, they have different qualities and have different roles in the workplace. Skills are soft skills. They can be characterized as character traits and social and behavioral abilities that enable you to collaborate well with your coworkers and advance your professional career. While hard skills are technical skills that apply to specific tasks and tasks, soft skills are transversal skills that can be transferred to different types of professions and fields.

Below you can find some examples of soft skills:

Problem solving: Employers highly value people who can resolve issues quickly and effectively. That may involve calling on industry knowledge to fix an issue immediately as it occurs, and consult with colleagues to find a long-term solution.

- **Communication:** involves knowing how you should speak to others in different situations or settings. You should find a way to talk in a kind and tactful way without creating conflict to your teamwork.
- **Creativity:** Broad ability adding many sets, related to soft skills and technical skills. Thanks to creativity, you can find new ways to perform tasks.
- **Work ethic:** ability to follow on tasks in a timely, quality manner. This will help you to build a good relationship with your co-workers and other colleagues.
- **Adaptability and flexibility:** capable of adapt to new situations quickly. You should be able to work in many industries or fields.

Hard skills, on the other hand, are your technical aptitude, therefore they are connected to your proficiency with formal procedures, tools, software, and equipment. In many different fields and professions, they are essential for carrying out duties or roles. They are quantifiable and measurable. Some examples are:

- **Data analyst and interpretation** (tools like Excel or Tableau)
- **Management work:** Most jobs require at least a little bit of office work, while others focus on administrative support (data entry, typing, research, business writing or project planning)
- **Speak languages.**
- **Digital marketing:** This can be technical skills (copywriting, content creator, SEO or social media advertising)
- **Mechanical skills** (welding, carpentry...)

The ability to combine the two sets of skills is priceless because it enables individuals to not only excel in their technical capabilities but also thrive in a connected and multicultural workplace.

Employers look for people who have a blend of soft and hard skills in today's fiercely competitive employment market.

The importance of soft skills in the world of work and entrepreneurship (concerning the World Economic Forum)

Soft skills are necessary for successful collaboration, problem-solving, and communication in the workplace, which is why they are so important in the worlds of employment and business. Soft skills are a valuable tool that can assist professionals and company owners in succeeding in their respective fields. Entrepreneurs are essential to any economy because they have the knowledge and initiative to foresee requirements and sell viable new ideas. Entrepreneurship that succeeds in assuming the risks involved in founding a firm is rewarded with money, notoriety, and chances for future growth.

Entrepreneurial dreamers are drawn to the idea of becoming their boss and making a fortune, but there are many risks involved in setting up shop. Income isn't guaranteed, employer-sponsored benefits disappear, and when your business experiences a financial setback, your assets may also be at risk in addition to the bottom line of the corporation. But risk can be greatly reduced by following a few tried-and-true rules.

Speaking of business world, we should point at The World Economic Forum. This is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1971, in Switzerland. The WEF met every year in Davos, Switzerland and it aims bring together political leaders, business executives, academics and other influential persons around the world to discuss and collaborate on global issues, including economic, social and environmental challenges. The WEF is independent, impartial, and not tied to any special interests. The Forum strives in all its efforts to demonstrate entrepreneurship in the global public interest while upholding the highest standards of governance.

The WEF article "This is how entrepreneurship will change in 2023" published in January 2023 discusses how the pandemic-related economic crisis and new social and environmental concerns are changing the entrepreneurship sector. In it is mentioned that people are nonconformists, not scared to challenge the status quo and attempt something different. They can be an essential part of creating the new goods and services required to advance the world economy and meet the upcoming problems. The number of women who wish to work for themselves in the UK has climbed to 17%, and Generation Z young people have also made the decision to work for themselves. A fifth of Gen Z sole traders say their small business is their first employment after graduating from college.

The most significant skills for entrepreneurship and the most relevant for freelancers

The ability to be a successful entrepreneur requires a variety of abilities. These abilities relate to the capacity to see and seize economic opportunities, the human creative endeavour of creating a company or something of value, the willingness to take calculated risks, and the capacity to marshal the resources required to seize the chance.

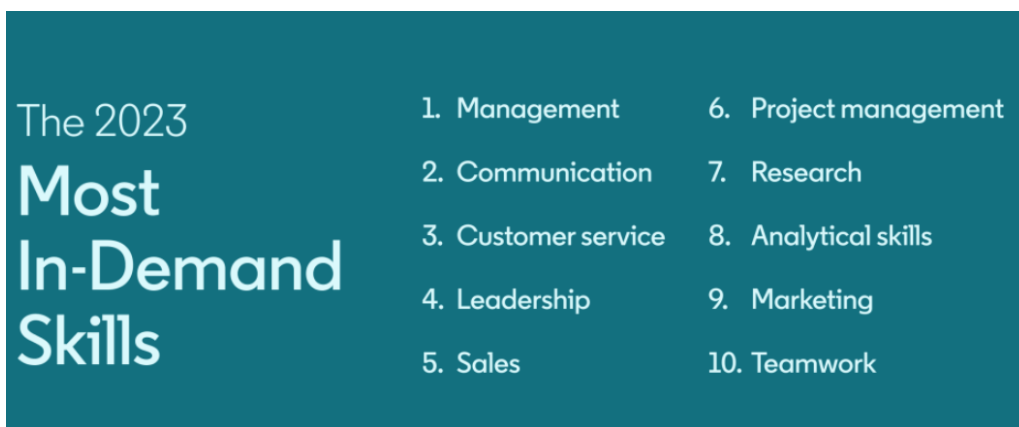
Additionally, there are other abilities like business management, so making a comprehensive plan with every component, such as a budget and timeline, ensures that these goals are realized. As a result, with a strong business strategy, your firm can improve. We should revisit the topic of communication as a difficult talent. You should be able to speak politely and professionally with coworkers, employers, clients, investors, and other partners in one-on-one or group settings. Because business world experiences ups and downs frequently, you should be adaptable and versatile if you want to build a firm. You should be able to stumble and recover.

Speaking of entrepreneurship skills, The Joint Research Centre, in partnership with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, has developed EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework. This study defines entrepreneurship as a lifelong competency, identifies the characteristics of entrepreneurs, and explains these characteristics in order to create a common language for projects including entrepreneurial learning. Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of transforming ideas into value for other people.

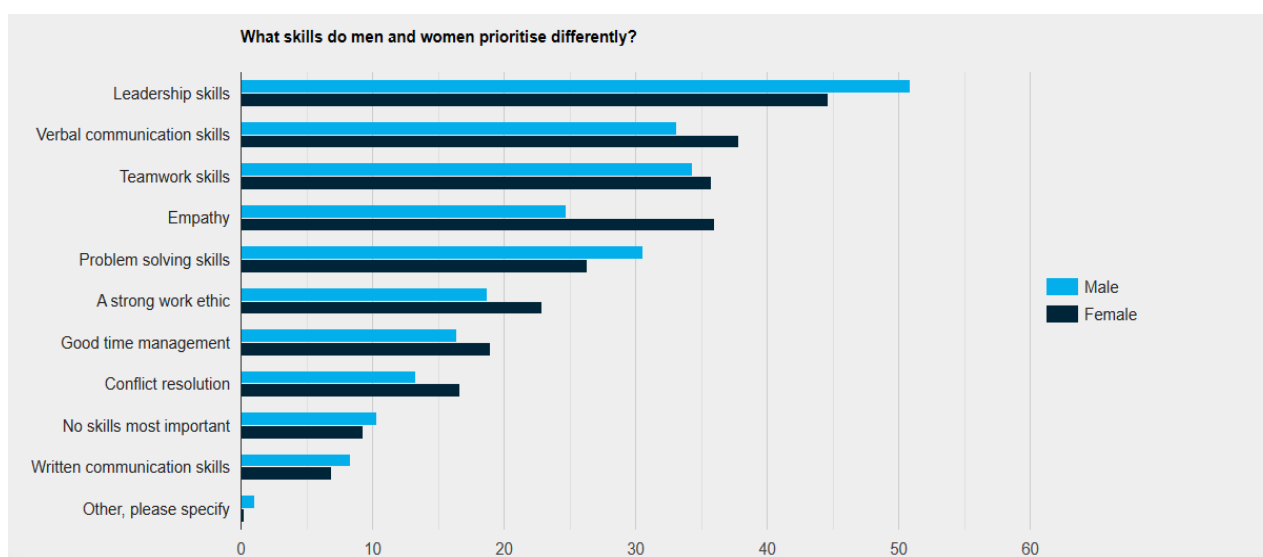
While, the most significance skills for freelancers according to EntreComp are communication, confidence, time management and passion to learn or curiosity.

- Communication: It is crucial that we discuss these soft skills once more because it is crucial for clearly and succinctly expressing thoughts, instructions, and information. Strong communication aids in relationship development and helps to avoid misunderstandings.
- You must be confident in yourself. You should be aware of your rights and obligations. Your future clients, consumers, or investors will believe in you if you are confident in your skills and potential.

- Time management: When you work alone, no one will be watching your work, your shift, or your responsibilities. There isn't any outside pressure. You should therefore control your own tasks and schedule. Be prepared and avoid putting things off.
- Passion to learn/curiosity: Freelancing world is dynamic so, you should keep this in mind and willing to learn new abilities, studies or skills that can help you appealing to new clients.



Dewar, J. (2023) The Most In-Demand Skills for 2023. Available in: The Most In-Demand Skills for 2023 | LinkedIn




Digits company. Soft skills statistics in the UK in 2022. Available in Soft skills statistics, facts & figures in the UK in 2022 - Digits

Relevant soft skills identified through the research and the Transnational Report

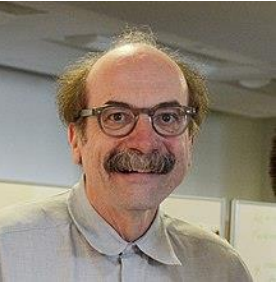
Analytical and critical thinking

Soft skill	Analytical and critical thinking Cognitive skill. It is an ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to make informed decisions, solve problems, and draw logical conclusions.
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	Enhancing their ability to succeed in their chosen fields and effectively manage their independent work.
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<p>Problem-solving: Analytical thinking enables freelancers to break down complex issues, identify root causes, and develop effective solutions.</p> <p>Project planning management: Freelancers need to manage their time, resources, and projects effectively. This skill is crucial for delivering high-quality work on time and within budget.</p> <p>Client communication: Freelancers often need to understand and meet their clients' specific needs. Analytical thinking allows freelancers to ask the right questions, gather relevant information, and interpret client instructions accurately.</p> <p>Data analysis: analyze and interpret data to provide insights or measure the success of their projects.</p>
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	Empowers freelancers to approach their work with a structured, strategic mindset. It enables them to tackle challenges, make informed decisions, deliver high-quality work, and effectively manage various aspects of their freelance business.
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<div> </div> <p>Ryan Holiday A successful author and marketer, Holiday has written several best-selling books on marketing and business strategy and is a sought-after speaker and consultant. He has written about social issues. Per example, he has written about media manipulation, but also about how traditional marketing isn't effective while growth hacking is more effective.</p>


Active Learning and Learning Strategies

Soft skill)	<p>Active Learning and Learning Strategies</p> <p>Is an approach to education that encourages students to engage with the learning material actively, rather than passively receiving information. It involves various strategies and techniques that promote deeper understanding, critical thinking, and retention of knowledge.</p>
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	It can have a positive impact on the activities of freelancers, enhancing their professional development, problem-solving capabilities, and overall effectiveness.
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<p>Enhanced understanding: Active learning encourages deeper engagement with the material, leading to better comprehension and retention of knowledge.</p> <p>Collaboration Skills: Many active learning strategies involve group work, fostering collaboration, communication, and teamwork.</p> <p>Learning different styles: it accommodates different learning styles, catering to visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and other learning preferences.</p>
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	<p>Collaboration and networking are important components of active learning. Freelancers can actively participate in online forums, communities, and social media platforms to network with colleagues, exchange ideas, and work together on projects.</p> <p>Continuous learning and skill development are important for independent contractors to stay competitive. By actively searching out resources, online courses, tutorials, and workshops, freelancers are encouraged to take control of their own education.</p> <p>Creative Problem-Solving: To stand out in a crowded market, freelancers frequently need to come up with novel ideas. Freelancers are encouraged by active learning to investigate unusual concepts, test out various tactics, and adjust to changing situations.</p>
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<p style="text-align: right;">Tim Ferris</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div> <p>He is a successful entrepreneur, author, and speaker who has successfully built a career as a freelancer.</p> <p>He has always been interested in self-improvements during all his life and he designed speed learning methods.</p> </div> </div>


Problem-solving

Soft skill	<p>Problem-solving</p> <p>Skills refer to our ability to solve problems in an effective and timely manner without any impediments.</p> <p>It involves being able to identify and define the problem, generating alternative solutions, evaluating and selecting the best alternative, and implementing the selected solution.</p>
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	Freelancers often encounter a wide range of issues, from client-related problems to technical difficulties. Effective problem-solving allows freelancers to overcome obstacles, deliver high-quality work, and maintain positive client relationships.
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<p>Technical Challenges and Skill Gaps: Freelancers actively research and actively learn new skills, actively seek out online resources, actively engage in self-paced courses, and actively collaborate with peers to address knowledge gaps and tackle technical challenges.</p> <p>Client Feedback and Revisions: actively approach feedback with an open mindset, actively seek to understand the client's perspective, and actively communicate their own rationale behind design choices.</p> <p>Market Competition and Differentiation: Freelancers actively recognize their distinctive abilities and strengths, actively build a powerful personal brand, actively display their portfolios, and actively customize their services to satisfy particular niche demands.</p>
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	In the freelancer field, active problem-solving involves proactive measures, clear communication, flexibility, and a willingness to learn and adapt. Freelancers who actively address challenges with creativity and resilience are better equipped to thrive in their independent careers.
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<p>David M. Kelley</p>  <p>American engineer, designer, businessman and educator, co-founder of the design company IDEO, he is a professor at Stanford University and developed the design thinking method.</p>


Creativity

Soft skill (name & description)	<p>Creativity</p> <p>It is a multifaceted and dynamic cognitive process that involves generating, combining, and transforming ideas, concepts, and elements to produce novel and valuable outcomes. It's the ability to think outside the box, break away from conventional patterns, and create something original and meaningful.</p>
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	Creativity is a driving force in the success of freelancers. It enhances differentiation, problem-solving, communication, and adaptability, ultimately leading to more clients, higher rates, and greater personal fulfilment. Freelancers who embrace and nurture their creativity are well-positioned to thrive in the dynamic and competitive freelance landscape.
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<p>Divergent Thinking: Practice generating a wide variety of ideas, solutions, and possibilities for any given problem. Avoid self-censorship and aim for quantity before quality during brainstorming sessions.</p> <p>Cross-Disciplinary Knowledge: Explore different fields of study and gather knowledge from diverse sources. The ability to connect concepts from seemingly unrelated areas can lead to breakthrough ideas.</p> <p>Collaboration: Engage in collaborative projects with individuals from different backgrounds. Collaborating with others can bring fresh perspectives and lead to innovative solutions.</p>
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	<p>Differentiation: In a crowded market for freelancers, creativity helps you stand out from the competition. Freelancers with new and creative ideas are more likely to be selected by clients.</p> <p>Innovation: The likelihood that a freelancer will promote innovation is higher when they continuously use creativity in their work. They can introduce new concepts, methodologies, and ideas that push the boundaries of what's possible.</p> <p>Branding and Marketing: Creativity plays a vital role in crafting a strong personal brand as a freelancer. A unique and creative brand identity helps you establish a memorable and authentic presence, attracting clients who resonate with your style.</p>
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="flex-grow: 1;"> <p>Ana Galvañ A comic author and illustrator freelancer, from Murcia, Spain. She finds inspiration in Bauhaus or from contemporary independent comic. Her latest published books are Press enter to continue and Afternoon at Mcburger's, both contain stories set in fantastic and science fiction universes.</p> </div> </div>

Leadership and Social Influence

Soft skill (name & description)	<p>Leadership and Social Influence</p> <p>Refers to the ability to guide, influence, and inspire individuals or groups toward achieving shared goals or objectives.</p> <p>Also, the ability to impact the attitudes, behaviours, and decisions of others through direct or indirect means. It involves the process of persuasion, conformity, and interaction in social contexts.</p>
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	<p>Leadership and social influence have profound effects on group dynamics, decision-making processes, and the achievement of goals. Effective leaders harness social influence to guide their teams toward success while considering ethical considerations and the well-being of their followers. Understanding these concepts is crucial for individuals aspiring to lead, inspire, and make a positive impact on the world around them.</p>
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<p>Reputation Building: Social influence plays a critical role in building a freelancer's reputation. Positive client reviews, testimonials, and referrals from satisfied clients can enhance a freelancer's social influence, attracting new clients.</p> <p>Networking: Freelancers who leverage social influence effectively can expand their professional networks. Engaging with peers, industry leaders, and potential clients online and offline can lead to valuable collaborations and opportunities.</p> <p>Credibility: Social influence adds to a freelancer's credibility. Sharing content, publishing articles, or speaking at industry events can position freelancers as experts in their field, attracting clients who value expertise.</p>
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	<p>Problem-Solving Orientation: Approach challenges with a problem-solving mindset, offering solutions and alternatives when issues arise.</p> <p>Higher Rates: A freelancer with a lot of social clout can frequently charge more since people esteem and respect them.</p> <p>Content Creation: Share informative content with your target audience, such as blog entries, podcasts, videos, or articles that show off your knowledge.</p>
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>Gretchen Rubin</p> <p>A successful author and speaker from United States. She is one of the most influential women of happiness and human nature. She can bring complex ideas from science to literature with clarity.</p> </div> </div>

Digital Skills

Soft skill (name & description)	<p>Digital Skills</p> <p>Set of competencies and abilities that enable individuals to effectively navigate, use, and leverage digital technologies for various purpose.</p>
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	<p>Every part of freelancing, from client acquisition to project delivery, depends on having strong digital abilities. They make it possible for independent contractors to effectively communicate, promote, collaborate, and grow their skills thanks to technology. Freelancers are better positioned to flourish in a challenging and competitive freelance environment if they embrace and constantly improve their digital abilities.</p>
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating graphics and manipulating photos with programs like Adobe Photoshop or Canva. • Employing software like iMovie or Adobe Premiere Pro for video production and editing. • Use social media for both personal and business purposes. • Using video conferencing applications for online meetings and cooperation (like Zoom and Microsoft Teams).
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	<p>Strong digital skills enable freelancers to reach an international market and are essential for successful sales. Potential clientele increases through easy access to online job boards, remote work options and clients from different regions.</p> <p>Freelancers can offer their services and attract clients through social media for marketing, content production and knowledge of search engine optimisation (SEO).</p> <p>Freelancers with digital skills can collect and review information about their work, such as website traffic, social media engagement or project performance. Decisions and strategies are influenced by a data-driven approach.</p>
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>Neil Patel</p> <p>He is a British entrepreneur, a New York Times best seller, marketing expert, speaker, and Internet personality. He is a co-founder of <u>Crazy Egg</u> which is a online platform that provide analytics tools, and he also founded Neil Patel Digital, which is a marketing agency specialized in data analytics, content marketing and search.</p> </div> </div>

Monitoring and Control

Soft skill (name & description)	<p>Monitoring and Control</p> <p>These ensure that activities, processes, or systems remain aligned with objectives, allowing for proactive management and optimization to achieve desired outcomes.</p>
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	<p>Playing a crucial role in ensuring the success of projects, maintaining client relationships, and fostering professional growth.</p> <p>Regular updates and progress reports encourage transparency, which increases clients' trust in the freelancer's professionalism and dependability; control measures ensure that the work produced meets high standards, resulting in client satisfaction and potential repeat business; and invoicing and payment collection ensure that freelancers receive compensation promptly and accurately. These are a few examples of important ways that monitoring and control positively affect freelancing.</p>
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<p>Freelancers receive information, metrics, and insights from a variety of sources, including time-tracking software, communication platforms, and project management tools.</p> <p>Freelancers regularly assess the calibre of their work to pinpoint areas for development, uphold uniform standards, and produce high-calibre results.</p> <p>It creates a feedback loop that enables independent contractors to monitor development, spot irregularities, and make necessary corrections during the course of a project.</p>
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	<p>Freelancers must keep track of project milestones, monitor project development, and make sure that tasks are being finished on schedule.</p> <p>To guarantee that their work is of a high caliber and meets the expectations of their clients, freelancers should keep an eye on the quality of their output.</p> <p>If problems emerge, independent contractors must take action to control them by resolving them quickly and amicably.</p>
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<div> </div> <p>Pascal Strasche</p> <p>He is a freelancer UI/UX designer and developer, from Germany. He helps companies to design intuitive products while ensure quality of results and keep tracking of the projects.</p>

Resilience, Stress Management and Flexibility

Soft skill (name & description)	<p>Resilience, Stress Management and Flexibility.</p> <p>These are closely related concepts that focus on an individual's ability to cope with and adapt to challenges, setbacks, and stressors in life. They involve psychological, emotional, and behavioral strategies that help individuals maintain their well-being and function effectively, even in the face of difficult circumstances.</p>
How does it impact on a freelancer's activity?	<p>These abilities are essential for achievement and long-term viability. Resilient freelancers can deal with the difficulties that will inevitably arise, and excellent stress management keeps them healthy and productive. Because flexibility enables freelancers to change course and grab new possibilities, clients find them more versatile and appealing.</p> <p>The dynamic and ever-changing world of freelancing is easier to handle for freelancers, who can grow both personally and professionally.</p>
What are the characteristics to be developed to prove you have it?	<p>Flexibility and openness to change: adapting one's strategies and approaches to changing circumstances.</p> <p>Emotion management: avoiding extreme emotional reactions and finding a healthy way to deal with them.</p>
What are the concrete behaviours (and benefits) that it can bring to the freelance business?	<p>Dealing with Uncertainty: Freelancers often face irregular income, varying workloads, and uncertainty about future projects.</p> <p>Time Management: Freelancers are responsible for handling their own deadlines and schedules, which can be stressful if not done well. Freelancers can stay on task by using stress-reduction techniques including time blocking, prioritizing, and setting reasonable expectations.</p> <p>Adapting to Client Needs: Freelancers often need to adjust their work to meet specific client requirements or preferences. Flexibility allows freelancers to accommodate changes without compromising the quality of their work.</p>
Example of a professional (preferably a freelancer) who has raised this soft skill to excellence? And one to be inspired by?	<div> </div> <p>Joan Didion</p> <p>She is a writer and American journalist. When she was a child, she pushed herself to act and speak in public because she wanted to get over her anxiety. She wrote <i>The Year of Magical Thinking</i> in 2004 as a reply about her husband's death and her daughter's illness.</p>

Conclusion

Freelancing has become a viable and attractive career path for people seeking autonomy, flexibility and a diverse range of projects. As the market model for freelancing is constantly expanding and evolving, soft skills have taken centre stage.

For those seeking autonomy, independence and a wide variety of assignments, freelance work offers an almost unlimited number of opportunities. Although technical skills are important, it is soft skills that play a crucial role. Interpersonal skills, communication skills, flexibility and the ability to solve problems are just a few examples of soft skills. Unfortunately, when it comes to acquiring and developing soft skills, these professionals encounter difficulties but also opportunities.

Freelancers often work alone, without the regular relationships and feedback that one gets in a traditional office. The growth of interpersonal and communication skills, which develop in collaborative environments, can be held back by this isolation. In addition, freelancers often manage multiple deadlines and projects. The amount of time available for focused skills development can be limited in this fast-paced working environment, especially for skills that require systematic practice and improvement.

One of the main challenges that freelancers face in acquiring and honing soft skills is breaking out of the inherent isolation that characterises their work.

Moreover, freelancers usually interact with a wide variety of clients, each of whom has different expectations, communication preferences and cultural backgrounds. This variety poses a problem, as freelancers have to manage and adapt skilfully to these differences, which requires a high level of empathy and interpersonal skills.

Time constraints represent another significant obstacle. Freelancers are renowned for their ability to juggle multiple projects and deadlines simultaneously. However, this hectic nature of work can limit the time available for the deliberate development of soft skills, particularly skills that require constant practice and refinement.

In addition, freelancers often find themselves resolving disputes and negotiating contracts directly with clients. This requires complex dispute resolution and negotiation skills, which may not be available in the absence of specific training.

Despite these obstacles, there are several opportunities for freelancers to learn and develop the soft skills that will set them apart in an environment of unbridled competition. Since freelancers are autonomous, they can adapt their efforts to meet their specific needs and preferences. Freelancers may actively seek out online training, conferences and other resources that are relevant to their skills development process to develop a sense of autonomy and responsibility for their own progress.

Versatility is a hallmark of freelancing. These professionals are often engaged in many projects, with different clients and across sectors. The complexity of the context suggests the need to be adaptable, quick in thinking and able to solve problems effectively. As a result, freelancers develop their own ability to navigate different contexts and thrive in a rapidly changing landscape.

Direct interaction with clients is another avenue through which freelancers can hone their soft skills. Unlike in traditional work contexts, freelancers interact with clients one-on-one, which provides ample opportunities to practice effective communication, active listening and empathy. Client feedback is an invaluable tool for understanding individual strengths and areas for improvement, enabling continuous skill enhancement.

Developing an articulate portfolio serves both to demonstrate one's technical competence and to showcase one's soft skills. By emphasising effective communication, teamwork and problem-solving in project descriptions and client testimonials, freelancers can present themselves as well-rounded experts.

Moreover, the proliferation of online freelance platforms and networks offers a special environment for skills development. Freelancers can interact with colleagues from all over the world, share experiences and get tips. Through collaborative learning and fostering a sense of community, these online communities are able to strengthen interpersonal skills and expand professional networks.

In conclusion, developing soft skills for freelancers is a dynamic journey full of opportunities and obstacles. Although there are difficulties to overcome, such as isolation, a wide variety of clients, time constraints and complicated negotiation situations, freelancers have the necessary resources to deal with them. The self-directed learning environment, task diversification, in-person interactions

with clients, portfolio building and sense of community that characterises freelancing platforms contribute to enhancing soft skills holistically.
By recognising these challenges and capitalising on the opportunities, freelancers can evolve into well-rounded professionals equipped to thrive in the dynamic freelance landscape.

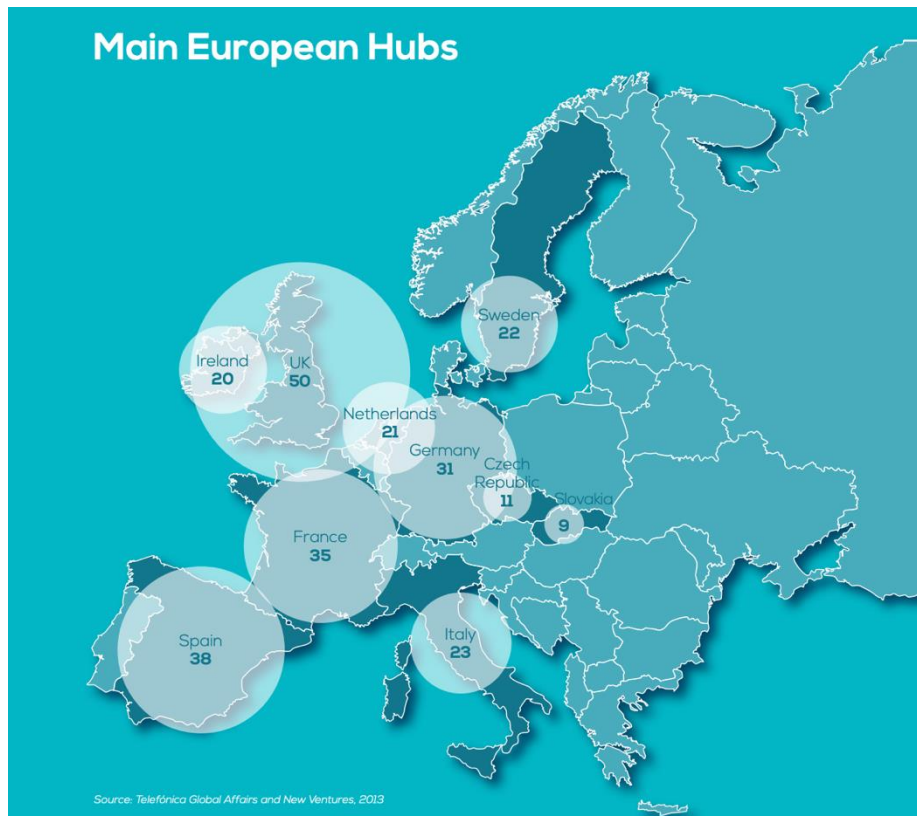
Chapter 2 – Incubator analysis



Source: Image by vectorjuice on Freepik (<https://bit.ly/3PyUHqO>)

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, the demand for entrepreneurial skills and digital competencies has never been higher. The rise of the gig economy and freelance work has paved the way for innovative approaches to vocational education and training (VET). This subchapter delves into the crucial domain of business incubators, shedding light on their diverse functions, themes, and origins. Furthermore, we explore the distinctions between private and public incubators, as well as the differentiation between incubators and accelerators.



Source graphic and data: The Accelerator and Incubator Ecosystem in Europe by Telefonica.

Clarifying the Essence of an Incubator

At the heart of entrepreneurial and e-skills training for freelancers lies the concept of an incubator. But what exactly is an incubator, and what are its primary characteristics?

Function: Incubators are specialized organizations or programs designed to nurture and support the growth of startups and early-stage businesses. They offer a dynamic ecosystem that fosters innovation, providing entrepreneurs with a range of resources, services, and mentorship.

Activities and Services: Incubators extend an array of vital services to their incubatees (startups). These services may include physical office space, access to a network of mentors and advisors, funding opportunities, access to technical facilities, and business development support. The overarching goal is to assist startups in overcoming initial hurdles and accelerating their growth.

Themes of Incubation

Incubators are not one-size-fits-all entities. They have evolved to cater to various industries and sectors, adapting to the diverse needs of the entrepreneurial landscape. Some of the key themes around which incubators have been developed include:

1. **Education:** Incubators focusing on educational technology (EdTech) aim to improve and innovate the educational sector by nurturing startups that develop e-learning solutions, digital platforms, and tools for educators and learners.
2. **Social Entrepreneurship:** These incubators concentrate on supporting startups with a social or environmental mission. They aid ventures that seek to make a positive impact on society while also being financially sustainable.
3. **FinTech (Financial Technology):** Incubators in the FinTech space support startups that innovate in the realm of finance and banking, creating cutting-edge solutions such as digital payments, blockchain technology, and peer-to-peer lending platforms.
4. **Green Technology:** Incubators focused on green technology support environmentally conscious startups developing solutions to address climate change, sustainable energy, and conservation.
5. **Homeland Security:** Homeland security incubators nurture startups that focus on technologies and services related to national security, including cybersecurity, disaster response, and defense innovations.
6. **Fashion:** Fashion incubators support emerging designers and fashion-tech startups, providing resources for product development, marketing, and industry networking.
7. **Food:** Incubators dedicated to the food industry assist startups involved in food technology, agriculture, and culinary innovation.

This non-exhaustive list highlights the adaptability of incubators, emphasizing their capacity to cater to a wide range of entrepreneurial pursuits.

Private vs. Public Incubators

Incubators are not limited to one specific model or source of origin. They can be broadly categorized into three types: university startup incubators, non-profit startup incubators, and corporate startup incubators. Here, we explore the distinctions between these categories and the reasons behind their existence.

University Startup Incubators: These incubators are typically set up within educational institutions. They offer a unique advantage by leveraging the academic environment to support student entrepreneurs and faculty-led startups. University incubators often focus on technology transfer and fostering a culture of innovation within the academic community.

Non-profit Startup Incubators: Non-profit organizations or government agencies often establish these incubators. They are driven by a mission to support entrepreneurship and economic development in a specific region or sector. Non-profit incubators prioritize social impact and may provide resources at little to no cost to startups.

Corporate Startup Incubators: These incubators are initiated by established companies seeking to innovate and diversify their portfolios. Corporate incubators collaborate with startups that align with their strategic goals, offering them access to resources, industry expertise, and potential investment opportunities.

Incubator vs. Accelerator: A Distinction

While the terms "incubator" and "accelerator" are sometimes used interchangeably, they serve distinct purposes in the startup ecosystem.

Incubator: As discussed earlier, incubators focus on providing a comprehensive suite of resources and support services to startups at an early stage. The emphasis is on long-term growth, mentorship, and a nurturing environment.

Accelerator: Accelerators, on the other hand, are typically time-limited programs that help startups rapidly grow and scale. They offer intensive mentorship, networking, and sometimes funding in exchange for equity. Accelerators aim to compress years of growth into a few months, culminating in a demo day where startups pitch to potential investors.

In the realm of VET training for freelancers, understanding these distinctions can be instrumental in choosing the right path for fostering entrepreneurial and e-skills development.

In the pages that follow, we will delve deeper into the inner workings of incubators, exploring their impact on entrepreneurial skill development and their significance in equipping freelancers for success in the modern economy.

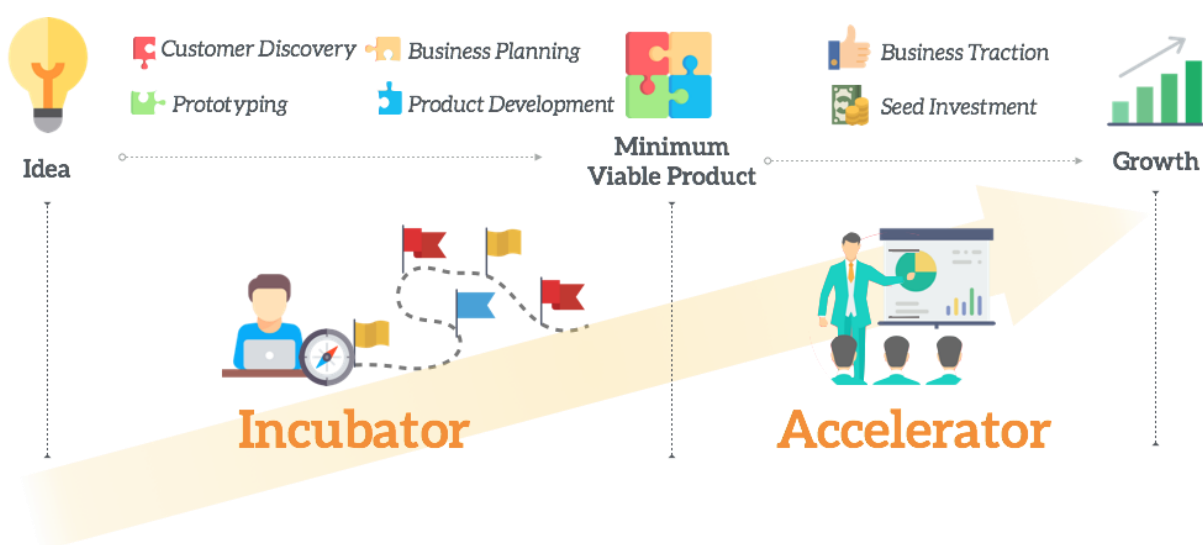


Image Source: www.medium.com online media site.

Census of Incubators

To have the widest variety across Europe, we have gathered examples of incubators for start-ups in which the 'traditional' incubator model and other models distinguishing different segments (e.g., incubators specialised in creative industries or working with start-ups in the social sphere) can be identified. The following examples showcase the diversity and adaptability of incubator models, each designed to meet the unique needs of startups operating in various sectors and with different goals. Whether it's traditional equity-focused incubators, social impact-driven programs, or specialized industry support, these incubators play a vital role in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship across the globe.

Example 1: Madrid International Lab (MIL), Spain

Name and location	Madrid International Lab (MIL) is located in Madrid, Spain.
Objectives and activities	MIL is a public incubator and innovation hub established by the Madrid City Council. It aims to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and the growth of startups, with a particular focus on technology and internationalization.
Offered services	<p>Office Space: MIL provides office space and workstations for startups in its program.</p> <p>Mentorship: Startups receive guidance and mentoring from experienced professionals.</p> <p>Training: MIL offers training sessions and workshops on various aspects of entrepreneurship, business development, and technology.</p> <p>Networking: The incubator hosts networking events, meetings, and conferences to connect startups with potential collaborators, investors, and experts.</p> <p>Access to Funding: MIL helps startups access funding opportunities and connects them with investors.</p>
Other types of consultancies	MIL primarily offers training and mentoring services to startups but may provide consultancy support when needed.
Cash prizes	MIL does not offer cash prizes but focuses on providing startups with resources, mentorship, and connections.
How to apply	Startups can apply to MIL through a call for applications. The application typically requires submission of a business plan, team information, and details about the startup's concept and goals.
Virtual or physical incubator	MIL operates as a physical incubator, providing office space and in-person support to startups.
Co-working service	Yes, MIL provides co-working spaces for startups in their program.
How long to stay in the incubator	The duration of incubation at MIL can vary depending on the specific needs and progress of each startup.
Networking events and meetings with venture capitalists	MIL regularly organizes networking events, industry-specific meetups, and opportunities to connect with venture capital firms.
Advantages/disadvantages	Some of the main advantages of joining MIL include access to a collaborative and innovative environment, mentorship from experienced professionals, co-working spaces, and networking opportunities within the Madrid entrepreneurial ecosystem.
Success stories to a freelance business model	Freelancers seeking to transition into entrepreneurship or startups targeting the global market can benefit from MIL's internationalization focus. They can tap into the mentorship and resources available to build and scale their businesses.
References	For more information and the latest updates, you can visit Madrid International Lab's official website: Madrid International Lab (MIL)

Example 2: Firma dla Każdego is an inkubator przedsiębiorczości, Poland.

Name and location	Firma dla Każdego is an inkubator przedsiębiorczości (business incubator) in Poland.
Brief description of objectives and activities	Their main goal is to assist beginner and often inexperienced entrepreneurs in taking their first steps in the market
What services are offered	Assistance with monthly payments (Social Security, taxes, accounting settlements) Consulting services (7 days a week) Training (lots of practical and theoretical knowledge)
Do they only provide training or also other types of consultancies?	Firma dla Każdego offers training and consultancy services to beginner entrepreneurs
Are cash prizes offered for the start-up of the activity?	There are no cash rewards for start-ups
How to apply and what documents must be submitted?	The application can be submitted spontaneously through the incubator's website, 15 minutes are sufficient to submit such an application. The incubator also develops a professional business plan tailored to your individual needs.
Is it a virtual or physical incubator?	It is a virtual incubator.
Does it also offer a co-working service?	As part of the incubator, it is only possible to use the conference room in Warsaw.
How long is it possible to stay in the incubator?	There is no set limit for staying in such an incubator, there is only a monthly fee for staying in the incubator.
Are there networking events and meetings with venture capitalists?	There is nothing mentioned that networking events are organised.
What are the main advantages/disadvantages?	Promotion of Entrepreneurship - Firma dla Każdego aims to promote entrepreneurship among both Poles and foreigners. Assistance with Monthly Payments - Firma dla Każdego offers assistance with monthly payments, including Social Security, taxes, and accounting settlements Consulting Services - The inkubator provides consulting services seven days a week. Training Opportunities - Firma dla Każdego offers training programs that provide practical and theoretical knowledge. Support for Foreign Entrepreneurs - The incubator aims to assist both Poles and foreigners, indicating that they provide support specifically tailored to the needs of foreign entrepreneurs
Success stories that can be somehow transferred to a freelance business model	One such service provided on this incubator is invoicing services for freelancers. Freelancers in Poland do not always have to register a company in order to invoice clients. They can sign a work contract or choose to work as a freelancer without registering a company. Incubator can help freelancers with invoicing and accounting for their own work.
References	https://firmadlakazdego.pl/ https://firmadlakazdego.pl/dla-pracodawcow/

Example 3: Orange Grove Athens, Greece

Name and location	Orange Grove Athens, Greece
Objectives and activities	Orange Grove is an incubator and platform that offers support to young entrepreneurs in Greece. Orange Grove helps startups and SMEs by providing them with training, workshops, networking opportunities, mentors, international know-how & best practices, access to international markets and much more!
Offered services	Trainings, Workshops, Networking, Mentoring and Among the services provided by Orange Grove, is the rotating Entrepreneur in Residence program, where an international business professional collaborates for a few months with Orange Grove, offering intensive support to startups concerning all kinds of issues. This service is provided ad hoc, depending on availability and cannot be guaranteed at all times.
Other types of consultancies	Orange Grove helps start-ups and young entrepreneurs in their starting journey of their companies through various offerings including consultancy.
Cash prizes	Orange Grove does not provide cash prizes for the start-ups but it provides them with the opportunity to speak and network with investors and secure funding.
How to apply	There are rounds of applications every few months. The call for applications is announced through their website and social media pages.
Virtual or physical incubator	It is a hybrid model
Co-working service	It offers facilities for start ups and entrepreneurs to start their journey
How long to stay in the incubator	Less than a year
Networking events and meetings with venture capitalists	Yes organized very often
Advantages/disadvantages	<p>Co-Working Space: Orange Grove provided a physical space where entrepreneurs and startups could work and collaborate. This co-working environment fosters networking and the exchange of ideas among like-minded individuals.</p> <p>Mentorship and Support: The organization offered mentorship programs, connecting startups with experienced entrepreneurs and business professionals who could provide guidance and support.</p> <p>Access to Resources: Startups at Orange Grove had access to a range of resources, including workshops, training programs, and educational events to help them develop their business skills.</p> <p>Networking Opportunities: Being part of Orange Grove gave startups the chance to network with investors, potential partners, and other entrepreneurs. This networking could lead to valuable connections and opportunities.</p> <p>International Exposure: Orange Grove aimed to connect Greek startups with the broader international startup ecosystem. This exposure could help startups expand their market reach and explore opportunities beyond Greece.</p> <p>Community and Collaboration: The organization created a community of entrepreneurs, fostering collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and experiences among its members.</p>

	<p>Access to Funding: Some startup incubators and accelerators, like Orange Grove, may offer access to funding opportunities, investor networks, or pitch events to help startups secure investment.</p> <p>Education and Training: Orange Grove often organized educational events, workshops, and training sessions to help startups build their skills and knowledge in various aspects of entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Exposure to Innovation: Startups at Orange Grove could immerse themselves in an innovative and entrepreneurial environment, which can be inspiring and beneficial for their own projects.</p> <p>Promotion of Greek Entrepreneurship: Orange Grove played a role in promoting entrepreneurship in Greece and supporting the growth of the local startup ecosystem.</p>
Success stories to a freelance business model	<p>Since 2013 the team of Orange Grove has helped 220 start-ups. For example, Democracy Game is a debating tool using fact-checking and gamification elements to facilitate the involvement of digital natives into the decision making not only in politics, but also in what is not true in politics. The project's vision is to restore the trust in politics in the mind and the heart of young people and make them able to fight misinformation that leads to the limitation of substantial humanitarian and civil rights and values. Also, Finance Lady is here to design and implement your best finance life. She helps individuals and SMEs to plan, budget, ditch debt and save, in the best way for them. She clears up all the financial mess and tailoring their financial habits to their needs and goals. Implement together an action-oriented plan and learn, how to. And very soon, make the best choices in each era and be confident about it. Navigate your finances on your own terms.</p>
References	https://orangegroove.eu/

Example 4: Birdhouse Accelerator, Ghent, Belgium

Name and location	Birdhouse Accelerator, Ghent, Belgium
Objectives and activities	Birdhouse Accelerator aims to nurture and support early-stage startups in Belgium. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide mentorship and resources to startups. - Facilitate access to funding and investors. - Foster innovation and entrepreneurial growth.
Offered services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mentorship and coaching for startups. - Access to a network of investors and experts. - Workshops and training programs.
Other types of consultancies	Besides training, they offer one-to-one mentorship and consultancy services to startups.
Cash prizes	The Birdhouse selected startups can count on receiving dedicated mentoring, an opportunity to get a 50K Bullet Loan (for startups who have or will have an activity in Belgium), access to a vast network of industry experts and investors as well as help in all the intricacies of startup financing. With Birdhouse start-ups receive up to 150k euro (with a minimum of 75k, of which 40k in cash and 35k in kind) during the program. After the program Birdhouse Ventures, the VC fund, can selectively invest larger tickets, cumulatively up to 1.5 millions euros.
How to apply	Typically through a call for applications on their website. Required documents may include a business plan and pitch presentation.
Virtual or physical incubator	It is a physical incubator with headquarters in Ghent in Belgium.
Co-working service	Yes, they often provide co-working spaces for startups.
How long to stay in the incubator	The duration of stay varies but is typically several months to a year.
Networking events and meetings with venture capitalists	Birdhouse Accelerator organizes networking events, meetings with venture capital firms, and pitch sessions to connect startups with potential investors.
Advantages/disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to a strong entrepreneurial community. -Guidance and mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs. -Networking opportunities with investors.
Success stories to a freelance business model	Many startups and alumni reach remarkable achievements within their individual sectors. Through groundbreaking solutions, collaborations, and awards, these startups are leaving a lasting impact. Among the examples: JustBite, WeGlow, Welexit and SalesNote.
References	https://www.gobirdhouse.com/

Example 5: Barcelona Activa – Media, Spain

Name and location	Barcelona Activa – Media – TIC Incubator
Objectives and activities	Barcelona Activa - Media-TIC Incubator is a renowned incubator in Barcelona, Spain, focused on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the media and technology sectors. Its primary goal is to support the growth of early-stage startups by providing them with the necessary resources, mentorship, and infrastructure to succeed in the competitive business landscape.
Offered services	<p>Training: Barcelona Activa offers comprehensive training programs, workshops, and seminars covering various aspects of entrepreneurship, including business development, marketing, and financial management.</p> <p>Consultancy: In addition to training, the incubator provides consultancy services through experienced advisors and industry experts. Startups can receive guidance on business strategy, market research, and product development.</p> <p>Access to Funding: The incubator helps startups connect with potential investors, including venture capital firms and angel investors, to secure funding for their projects.</p> <p>Networking: Barcelona Activa organizes regular networking events, allowing startups to connect with mentors, industry peers, and potential collaborators. They also facilitate meetings with venture capital firms and other funding sources.</p> <p>Co-working Space: The incubator offers physical co-working spaces within the iconic Media-TIC building, fostering collaboration and creativity among startups.</p> <p>Mentorship: Startups can access a pool of experienced mentors and advisors who provide guidance and support throughout their incubation period.</p>
Other types of consultancies	They also provide consultancy services through experienced advisors and industry experts in addition to the training.
Cash prizes	It's not mentioned.
How to apply	Interested startups can apply through a structured call for applications, typically requiring submission of a business plan, team details, and a presentation of their innovative ideas. The selection process is competitive but ensures that promising startups receive the support they need.
Virtual or physical incubator	Barcelona Activa - Media-TIC Incubator is a physical incubator located in the heart of Barcelona.
Co-working service	Yes, it provides startups with a dedicated workspace.
How long to stay in the incubator	Startups can stay in the Barcelona Activa - Media-TIC Incubator for up to two years, with the possibility of extension based on their progress and specific needs.
Networking events and meetings with venture capitalists	Barcelona Activa organizes regular networking events, allowing startups to connect with mentors, industry peers, and potential collaborators. They also facilitate meetings with venture capital firms and other funding sources.
Advantages/disadvantages	<p>Access to a vibrant ecosystem of startups, mentors, and investors.</p> <p>Networking opportunities to foster collaboration and growth.</p> <p>Tailored training and consultancy services to improve business acumen.</p> <p>Access to a creative and collaborative co-working environment.</p>

	Guidance in securing funding from various sources.
Success stories to a freelance business model	One of the success stories from Barcelona Activa - Media-TIC Incubator is "X-Stream Technologies," a startup specializing in advanced water purification solutions. With the support of the incubator, X-Stream Technologies not only secured funding but also expanded its operations globally. Freelancers in the water technology sector could take inspiration from X-Stream's journey to explore innovative solutions and expand their reach in niche markets.
References	Barcelona Activa-Media-TIC Incubator Website: https://www.barcelona.cat/barcelonactiva/en/start-ups-and-growing-companies/media-tic "Media-TIC: un catalizador para la innovación creativa en Barcelona" (PDF): https://media.dandelion-europe.eu/uploads/2020/05/13050354/Media-TIC-Case-Study.pdf

Example 6: SocialFare is located in Turin, Italy

Name and location	SocialFare is located in Turin, Italy.
Objectives and activities	SocialFare is a pioneering center for social innovation and entrepreneurship. Its mission is to accelerate the growth of social startups and innovative projects that address social and environmental challenges. SocialFare aims to create a positive impact by supporting initiatives that combine business solutions with a focus on societal well-being.
Offered services	<p>Co-working Space: SocialFare provides co-working spaces for social startups, offering a collaborative environment.</p> <p>Mentorship and Coaching: Startups receive mentorship and coaching from experts in social entrepreneurship, sustainability, and innovation.</p> <p>Networking Opportunities: SocialFare hosts events, workshops, and networking sessions to connect startups with like-minded entrepreneurs, investors, and partners.</p> <p>Impact Measurement: SocialFare assists startups in measuring and optimizing their social and environmental impact.</p> <p>Access to Funding: The incubator helps startups access funding opportunities and connects them with impact investors and grant programs.</p>
Other types of consultancies	SocialFare offers both training and consultancy services to help startups refine their business models and impact strategies.
Cash prizes	SocialFare primarily focuses on providing startups with resources, mentorship, and connections. Cash prizes may be available through specific competitions or programs
How to apply	Startups can apply to SocialFare by responding to specific calls for applications or by reaching out directly through the contact information provided on their website. The application process may require the submission of a business plan and details about the startup's social impact objectives.
Virtual or physical incubator	SocialFare operates as a physical incubator, offering co-working and in-person support to startups.
Co-working service	Yes, SocialFare provides co-working spaces for startups in their program.
How long to stay in the incubator	The duration of incubation at SocialFare can vary depending on the specific needs and progress of each startup.
Networking events and meetings with venture capitalists	SocialFare regularly organizes networking events, workshops, and thematic meetups to foster connections within the social entrepreneurship community.
Advantages/disadvantages	Joining SocialFare offers social startups access to a supportive community, mentorship from experts in social innovation, opportunities to collaborate with like-minded entrepreneurs, and assistance in maximizing their social and environmental impact.
Success stories to a freelance business model	Freelancers with a passion for creating social impact can benefit from SocialFare's ecosystem by transforming their freelance work into a social startup that addresses pressing societal issues.
References	For more information and the latest updates, you can visit SocialFare's official website: SocialFare

Example 7: The Family, Paris, France

Name and location	The Family is located in Paris, France, with additional locations in London, Berlin, and Brussels.
Objectives and activities	The Family is a pan-European startup incubator and accelerator that aims to support early-stage tech startups across various sectors. Their mission is to provide startups with resources, mentorship, and a vibrant community to help them grow and scale.
Offered services	<p>Mentorship: Startups receive mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs, investors, and industry experts.</p> <p>Training and Workshops: The Family offers training programs and workshops covering essential topics for startups, including business development, fundraising, and growth strategies.</p> <p>Networking: Regular networking events and meetups are organized to help startups connect with potential collaborators, investors, and partners.</p> <p>Access to Funding: The Family assists startups in raising capital by connecting them with investors, venture capital firms, and angel investors.</p> <p>Co-working Space: They provide co-working spaces for startups to work in a collaborative environment.</p>
Other types of consultancies	The Family primarily focuses on training and mentoring services but may offer consultancy support when needed.
Cash prizes	The Family does not typically offer cash prizes; instead, they concentrate on providing startups with resources, mentorship, and access to funding.
How to apply	Startups can apply to The Family through a competitive application process. The application typically includes information about the startup's team, business concept, and goals.
Virtual or physical incubator	The Family primarily operates as a physical incubator, offering co-working spaces and in-person support. However, they also offer virtual support and resources for startups in their network.
Co-working service	Yes, The Family provides co-working spaces for startups in their program.
How long to stay in the incubator	The duration of incubation at The Family can vary, but it often involves several months of support.
Networking events and meetings with venture capitalists	The Family regularly hosts networking events, workshops, and opportunities for startups to engage with potential investors and partners.
Advantages/disadvantages	Joining The Family offers startups access to a dynamic and diverse entrepreneurial community, mentorship from successful entrepreneurs, resources to accelerate growth, and opportunities to secure funding for their ventures.
Success stories to a freelance business model	Freelancers with innovative ideas or those looking to expand their services into scalable tech startups can benefit from The Family's ecosystem by gaining mentorship, access to resources, and networking opportunities to transform their freelance work into a successful startup.
References	For more information and the latest updates, you can visit The Family's official website: The Family

Final Thoughts and Conclusions

Startup incubators play a crucial role in nurturing and supporting early-stage ventures. However, like any model, they come with their own set of advantages and disadvantages. In this section, we will explore these factors, offering insights into what entrepreneurs and stakeholders should consider when evaluating and choosing among different types of incubators.

Advantages of Startup Incubators

1. Access to Resources

Advantage: Incubators provide startups with invaluable resources such as office space, infrastructure, access to laboratories, and equipment. This significantly reduces initial overhead costs and allows entrepreneurs to focus on product development and growth.

Benefit for Freelancers: Freelancers in need of workspace, equipment, or specialized facilities can benefit from incubators that offer these resources, allowing them to work more efficiently and access tools they might not afford on their own.

2. Mentorship and Guidance

Advantage: Incubators typically offer mentorship and guidance from experienced entrepreneurs, industry experts, and investors. This mentorship can help startups avoid common pitfalls, make informed decisions, and accelerate their learning curve.

Benefit for Freelancers: Freelancers can gain valuable business insights and expand their skill sets through mentorship, enhancing their entrepreneurial capabilities and overall competitiveness.

3. Networking Opportunities

Advantage: Incubators provide a ready-made network of fellow entrepreneurs, potential collaborators, and investors. Building relationships within the incubator ecosystem can lead to partnerships, funding, and market opportunities.

Benefit for Freelancers: Freelancers can expand their client base, collaborate on projects, and find opportunities for new work within the incubator's network, fostering professional growth.

4. Access to Funding

Advantage: Many incubators offer access to funding opportunities, including seed funding, angel investors, and venture capital connections. This can be critical for startups seeking to secure financial support.

Benefit for Freelancers: Freelancers looking to scale their operations or fund innovative projects can leverage the funding resources available within an incubator.

5. Learning Environment

Advantage: Incubators create a dynamic learning environment where startups can exchange ideas, share experiences, and learn from each other. This collaborative atmosphere fosters creativity and innovation.

Benefit for Freelancers: Freelancers can benefit from exposure to diverse skill sets and expertise, enhancing their problem-solving abilities and adaptability.

Disadvantages of Startup Incubators

1. Equity or Equity-like Investments

Disadvantage: Many incubators take equity in the startups they support. This means that in exchange for resources and mentorship, startups give up a percentage of ownership. This can limit future financial gains for founders.

Consideration for Freelancers: Freelancers should be aware of the equity terms when choosing an incubator model. Depending on their goals, they may prefer non-equity or equity-lite incubators.

2. Limited Autonomy

Disadvantage: Incubators often have specific programs, timelines, and expectations. Startups may have less autonomy and flexibility in decision-making during their incubation period.

Consideration for Freelancers: Freelancers seeking complete autonomy may prefer coworking spaces or alternative arrangements that do not impose strict guidelines.

3. Competitive Selection

Disadvantage: Many incubators have highly competitive application processes, with acceptance rates sometimes as low as single digits. Not all startups that apply are guaranteed entry.

Consideration for Freelancers: Freelancers should carefully evaluate their readiness and qualifications before applying to incubator programs.

4. Potential Mismatch

Disadvantage: Incubators are not one-size-fits-all. Choosing the wrong incubator that does not align with a startup's industry, goals, or stage can be detrimental.

Consideration for Freelancers: Freelancers should assess whether an incubator specializes in their field or offers the resources and support they need for their specific projects.

Criteria for Choosing an Incubator

When selecting an incubator, whether you're a startup or a freelancer seeking entrepreneurial skills and support, consider the following criteria:

1. **Program Focus:** Does the incubator have a specific industry or sector focus that aligns with your goals and expertise?
2. **Resources:** Evaluate the resources provided, including office space, equipment, funding options, and mentorship.
3. **Equity vs. Non-equity:** Decide if you are willing to exchange equity for support or if you prefer non-equity arrangements.
4. **Track Record:** Research the incubator's success stories and alumni to assess its effectiveness.
5. **Network:** Consider the quality and reach of the incubator's network for potential collaborations and opportunities.
6. **Location:** Location can influence networking and access to industry-specific resources.
7. **Duration:** Determine whether the program's timeline aligns with your needs and objectives.

Relevant Features for Developing a Freelancers' Incubator

When developing an incubator tailored for freelancers, certain features become especially relevant:

1. **Flexible Workspace:** Provide adaptable workspace options that cater to freelancers' diverse needs, including quiet areas, meeting rooms, and collaborative spaces.
2. **Skill-building Workshops:** Offer workshops and training sessions covering essential entrepreneurial and e-skills, including project management, marketing, finance, and client management.
3. **Networking Events:** Organize events that facilitate networking among freelancers, potential clients, and industry experts.
4. **Project Collaboration Opportunities:** Create mechanisms for freelancers to collaborate on projects, enhancing their skill sets and fostering innovation.
5. **Mentorship and Coaching:** Provide access to experienced mentors who can guide freelancers in building successful independent careers.
6. **Client Acquisition Support:** Offer strategies and resources for freelancers to acquire and retain clients effectively.
7. **Financial Resources:** Explore options for freelancers to access funding or grants for special projects or business expansion.

In conclusion, startup incubators offer a range of advantages and disadvantages, and choosing the right one requires careful consideration of your goals and needs. When developing an incubator for freelancers, it's essential to focus on features that address the unique challenges and aspirations of independent professionals in the modern workforce.

Chapter 3 - Best practices of training for entrepreneurs and freelancers



Source: Image by vectorjuice on Freepik (<https://bit.ly/3vIDcDG>)

Introduction

This sub-chapter aims to:

- Identify the most popular topics in entrepreneurship training,
- Describe the most widely used teaching methodologies,
- Describe how the private proposal of countries is distributed with respect to European resources,
- Highlight, if any, the characteristics of the offer available for freelancers.

Entrepreneurship training programs across various European countries offer a diverse range of topics and teaching methodologies to empower individuals and foster business success. Among the most popular topics covered are general entrepreneurship skills (business management), digital marketing, innovation, and coaching.

- **Business Management (general entrepreneurship skills):** Understanding the fundamentals of business management is essential for any entrepreneur/freelancer. This topic covers areas such as business planning, financial management, operations, and strategic decision-making. Entrepreneurs learn how to create and execute business plans, manage budgets, and how to run a successful enterprise.
- **Digital Marketing:** Nowadays, a strong online presence is crucial for business success. Entrepreneurship programs often include training in digital marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, and email marketing. Entrepreneurs gain the skills to effectively promote their businesses in the digital landscape.
- **Innovation:** Entrepreneurship training programs emphasize innovation strategies that encourage creativity, problem-solving, and the development of unique business ideas. These strategies help entrepreneurs identify opportunities for growth and disruption.
- **Sector-Specific Skills/Coaching:** Many programs offer specialized training fitted to specific industries or sectors. For example, programs in the cultural sector, like those offered by ProfilCultura in Italy, focus on skills relevant to cultural management, arts education, and creative content creation. Sector-specific training allows entrepreneurs to excel in niche markets.

The teaching methodologies employed in these programs often blend traditional classroom sessions, practical workshops, online learning platforms, and real-world projects to provide a well-rounded educational experience.

- **Traditional Classroom Sessions:** These sessions provide a structured environment for theoretical learning, where participants can engage with course materials, lectures, and discussions.
- **Workshops:** Workshops offer practical experience and skill development. Participants can apply what they learn in a controlled, supportive setting.
- **Online Learning Platforms:** Many programs incorporate virtual learning platforms that provide flexibility for participants to access course materials and collaborate with peers online.
- **Real-World Projects:** Entrepreneurship programs often include project-based learning, where participants work on real business projects, gaining practical experience and applying their knowledge.

While many countries often provide training opportunities through both public and private initiatives, there are noteworthy opportunities distributed with respect to European resources (European Parliament support on youth entrepreneurship). However, private proposals, such as those offered by individual organizations and institutions, play an important role in providing specialized training fitted to specific sectors and needs.

For freelancers, the landscape of entrepreneurship training is evolving. While there are valuable programs available, there is a need to develop more customized and specialized training exclusively designed for freelancers. These programs should address the unique challenges faced by freelancers, including client management, pricing strategies, and project scoping. Additionally, nurturing dedicated freelancer communities (e.g. alumni) and networks can enhance peer support, collaboration, and mentorship opportunities within the entrepreneurial world. As the freelance economy continues to grow, custom training programs and support networks will play a crucial role in empowering freelancers to succeed in their respective fields.

Best practices' collection

This section contains a catalogue of valuable experiences in entrepreneurship training in all the countries of the Consortium. The catalogue gathers entrepreneurship training courses or providers offering services that can also be used by freelancers following a criterion of variety by methodology (formal, informal, non-formal, learning by doing, participative training, digital, face-to-face).

BELGIUM

We are Founders

Training	The "We are Founders" program offers a comprehensive array of training modules tailored to empower entrepreneurs and freelancers within the European Parliament community. The program is designed to provide valuable insights, practical tools, and essential knowledge to support participants on their entrepreneurial journey.
Topic	The program covers an extensive range of topics crucial to entrepreneurship and freelancing success. These topics encompass areas such as business development, strategic planning, marketing, financial management, legal considerations, and more.
Objectives	The primary goal of the "We are Founders" program is to equip participants with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to establish and grow successful businesses. The program aims to foster innovation, enhance problem-solving capabilities, and enable participants to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship effectively.
Methodology	The program employs a dynamic and interactive methodology that combines expert-led lectures, practical workshops, case studies, and collaborative activities. This approach ensures participants not only grasp theoretical concepts but also develop hands-on skills that can be applied to real-world scenarios.
Sector of production	The program is designed to be versatile and adaptable across various product sectors and industries. It caters to participants from diverse business backgrounds, including technology, creative industries, services, and more.
Measuring results and evaluations	The effectiveness of the program is assessed through a combination of continuous assessments, practical assignments, participant presentations, and peer evaluations. This comprehensive approach ensures participants are actively engaged and are progressing in their learning journey.
Delivery channel	The "We are Founders" program offers a flexible delivery channel that includes both virtual and physical components. Virtual sessions enable participants to join remotely, while in-person workshops provide hands-on learning experiences and networking opportunities.
Alumni community	Upon completing the program, participants gain access to an exclusive alumni community. This community serves as a platform for ongoing networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among past and current participants.
Success stories	The program has generated numerous success stories, with participants reporting significant achievements in their entrepreneurial pursuits. Many alumni have successfully launched businesses, secured funding, expanded their market presence, and contributed positively to their respective industries.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	The "We are Founders" program is highly relevant and beneficial to freelancers. It equips them with the essential skills to effectively manage their freelance careers, navigate the complexities of self-employment, and seize opportunities for growth and success.

Freelance Business Masterclasses

Training	The Freelance Business Masterclasses have been meticulously designed to offer freelancers a unique opportunity for growth, education, and empowerment. These online sessions feature industry experts sharing their insights on critical aspects of freelancing, such as business strategies, pricing dynamics, legal considerations, effective partnerships, and the psychology of successful entrepreneurs.
----------	---

Topic	The masterclasses cover a wide spectrum of topics crucial to freelancers' success depending on the speakers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game changers – Business Management • Playful productivity • Master of art of outranking your competitors on Google with Micro-SEO Strategies • How to break 7 digits in revenue • Pricing strategies for freelance projects • Mastering contract negotiations for freelancing • Navigating freelance platforms: the pros and cons
Goals	The main goal is to give freelancers useful insights, knowledge and skills to excel in their independent profession, providing participants with practical strategies to improve their business performance, build stronger partnerships and navigate the self-employment landscape with confidence.
Methodology	Each masterclass features a distinguished industry expert who shares their expertise, experiences, and proven strategies. Participants gain valuable insights through interactive discussions, put newly acquired knowledge to work immediately, case studies, and Q&A sessions. So each time everyone can see a completely different masterclass integrating also the personality of the speaker.
Sector of production	The masterclasses transcend specific product sectors, focusing on universal principles and strategies applicable to a broad range of freelance professionals.
Measuring results and evaluations	The effectiveness of the masterclasses is assessed through participant feedback, engagement levels, and the application of acquired knowledge in real-world freelancing scenarios.
Delivery channel	All masterclasses are conducted virtually, providing participants with convenient access from any location with an internet connection.
Alumni community	Upon attending the masterclasses, participants become part of vibrant and growing alumni community. This community fosters networking, knowledge-sharing, and ongoing support among freelancers.
Success stories	There are numerous success stories of freelancers who have implemented strategies learned from the masterclasses, leading to increased revenue, improved client relations, and enhanced professional growth.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	The masterclasses are specifically tailored to freelancers, offering insights and strategies that directly benefit those engaged in freelance work. They provide practical tools to tackle common challenges and elevate freelancers' overall performance.

ITALY

Flowerista

Training	Flowerista's training program is a comprehensive ecosystem designed to support individuals in the Creative and Cultural sector. It provides a range of training, consultancy, visibility, and job opportunities for aspiring freelancers and entrepreneurs in these domains.
Topic	Flowerista's training program focuses on nurturing creative and entrepreneurial skills within the Creative and Cultural sector.

Goals	The program aims to empower freelancers and entrepreneurs to start or grow their businesses successfully, aligned with their creative passions. It also strives to foster a community of collaboration and innovation among individuals in the sector.
Methodology	Flowerista employs a blended learning approach, combining digital resources, workshops, and hands-on projects to enhance skills and knowledge. The program emphasizes practical application, encouraging participants to implement learned concepts in real-world scenarios.
Sector of production	Flowerista's training program is tailored for individuals within the Creative and Cultural sector, offering targeted insights and strategies relevant to this unique industry.
Measuring results and evaluations	The program's effectiveness is measured through participant engagement, project outcomes, and feedback. Participants' progress, skill development, and successful project implementation serve as indicators of the program's impact.
Delivery channel	The training is primarily delivered through a virtual platform, allowing participants to access resources and engage in learning from any location.
Alumni community	Flowerista fosters a vibrant alumni community, connecting past participants to provide ongoing support, networking opportunities, and collaborative ventures.
Success stories	Numerous success stories within the Creative and Cultural sector have emerged as a result of Flowerista's training program. Graduates have launched innovative startups, enhanced their businesses' brand awareness, and achieved sustainable growth.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	Flowerista's training program is highly relevant to freelancers seeking to establish or expand their ventures within the Creative and Cultural sector. The program equips them with essential skills, resources, and a supportive community to navigate the challenges and opportunities of freelancing successfully.

Growth Program offered by Raffaele Gaito

Training	Growth Program offered by Raffaele Gaito
Topic	The Growth Program focuses on various aspects of business growth, innovation, and multidisciplinary skills development.
Goals	Enhance business growth and evolution. Foster a mindset oriented towards experimentation and innovation. Improve personal and professional skills relevant to marketing, business, and innovation.
Methodology	The program employs a multifaceted approach, including live lessons, masterclasses, Q&A sessions, and community engagement. The curriculum is designed to provide participants with practical knowledge and strategies for driving growth and innovation in their businesses and projects.
Sector of production	The Growth Program is not limited to a specific product sector. It aims to equip entrepreneurs, professionals, and managers with skills that can be applied across various industries and sectors.
Measuring results and evaluations	The program measures outcomes and participant progress through various means, such as project reviews during live Q&A sessions, engagement within the community, and the application of newly acquired skills to real-world business challenges. The specific evaluation criteria may vary depending on the situation of the participant.
Delivery channel	The delivery channel for the Growth Program is primarily virtual, conducted through online platforms like Zoom for live lessons, Q&A sessions, and community interactions. This virtual format allows participants to access the program from anywhere. But there are also sessions in present.
Alumni community	There is an alumni community associated with the program, providing ongoing support and networking and more opportunities for past participants. This community serves as a valuable resource for continued growth and collaboration.
Success stories	The program has helped participants achieve growth and success in their businesses and projects. Success stories may include improved strategies, increased revenue, innovative solutions and of course their businesses that didn't go bankrupt.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	The Growth Program is useful for freelancers, as it offers a holistic approach to business growth, innovation, and multidisciplinary skill development. Freelancers can benefit from the program's focus on marketing, business, and experimentation to enhance their professional capabilities and expand their clientele. As Raffaele Gaito expresses it, those who do business and the freelance profession need to keep up with the continuous news of marketing and business.

ProfilCultura

Training	ProfilCultura aims to meet the diverse recruitment needs in the public and private cultural sector in Italy.
----------	--

	Profilculture offers new skills through specialised courses in Adobe premiere pro, Writing workshops, Risk Prevention, After effects, Copyrights and contracts, Mediation for schools, WYSIWYG, Final cut pro 5 HD, Photo editing, Radio broadcasting...
Topic	In the dynamism of the professionalization of the field of culture and with a view to the evolution of the methods of dissemination of opportunities, ProfilCultura aims to offer job offers, internships, work experience, workshops, vocational training courses, and matching of job offer and demand.
Goals	ProfilCultura provides with a search engine through which you can find training courses to work in all areas of culture. Cultural project and event management, Administration, Cultural mediation, Cultural management, Design, Stage management, Fine arts, Art education, 3D graphic design, Sound engineering, Cultural heritage conservation, Editorial management, Production management, Editing and post-production, Visual communication, Illustration, Art market, Journalism...
Methodology	<p>ProfilCultura analyses the market and employment trends in the field of culture, assisting structures in the sector in their recruitment phases. By intervening in the selection process, adapt methods, means used and methods of intervention to the specificities and requirements of each structure. The team of consultants comes from the world of culture and possesses complementary skills that are indispensable for the effective resolution of different recruitment needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose an effective and responsive tool to connect culture professionals and recruiters in the sector, • Fostering interaction between different cultural sectors through the mobility of professionals, • Contributing to greater transparency in cultural employment, • Offer a diffusion service that takes into account the peculiarities of the sector with tariffs adapted to all types of facilities.
Sector of production	Cultural sector
Measuring results and evaluations	<p>The outcomes are measured considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the numbers of connection between the cultural professionals and recruiters in the sector • The number of freelancers that obtain a job • The number of people that participate to a course • The number of companies that hire
Delivery channel	Virtual and physical
Alumni community	no
Success stories	no
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	yes

lfoa

Training	<p>Since 1971, lfoa have been working to maintain and strengthen the link between people and companies, as a real bridge that people can travel to reach the world of work.</p> <p>Useful Knowledge is the asset, transferring Useful Knowledge the goal.</p>
----------	---

	<p>lfoa is a Training Organisation, created by the Chambers of Commerce, and an Employment Agency, a combination that allows to offer growth, training, professionalisation and job placement programmes.</p> <p>lfoa work on a national and international scale driven by the desire to transfer useful knowledge to people, companies and territories. As a non-profit organisation, lfoa develop its activities by following the rules of a code of ethics whose objective is the professional growth of the individual.</p>
Topic	<p>lfoa support itself with an ongoing commitment to aligning services to the needs of the economic and international environment.</p> <p><u>For companies</u></p> <p>lfoa work together with companies to meet their need for constant skills upgrading: the catalogue courses and tailor-made training solutions ensure that companies enhance the professional performance of their employees.</p> <p>lfoa support companies not only in designing and implementing but also in financing ad hoc training plans by promoting the use of tools such as vouchers and Interprofessional Funds, supporting and guiding them in the process of finding new staff.</p> <p><u>For people</u></p> <p>lfoa realise highly qualifying and professionalising post-diploma and post-graduate master courses. The courses focus on individual vocational families and are developed while always maintaining a close link with companies and their needs. In order to make the training accessible to an increasing number of people, lfoa constantly activate market-based courses and courses financed by regional and European contributions.</p> <p>lfoa is involved in projects with public administrations, both Italian and foreign, to bring know-how and spread best practices to the benefit of other realities and territories.</p>
Goals	<p>Reading current transformations, listening to and interpreting needs, anticipating and concretizing appropriate responses, leads to develop training activities in a variety of specialized fields, job placement services, pathways to self-entrepreneurship, technical assistance and consultancy services</p>
Methodology	<p>lfoa have increased and modified its subject areas according to the needs of the market, which increasingly demands resources with real professional training. For this reason, the lecturers come from the business world, sharing their direct experience. The courses are almost always combined with company internships, precisely in order to give continuity to theory with practice and facilitate the students' transition to the world of work.</p>
Sector of production	<p>lfoa's is a savoir-faire-oriented training developed from a constant and intense relationship with companies. It is precisely from companies, operators in the field, consultants and experts that draw to define the training offerings and feed our rich faculty.</p> <p>That is why lfoa is able to provide useful training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Useful for those who are already in work and want to update or specialise - Useful for young people who want to enter the world of work

	- Useful for those who intend to acquire the necessary skills to work on new technologies and innovative processes
Measuring results and evaluations	The outcomes are measured considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the numbers of connection between the professionals and recruiters in the sector • The number of freelancers that obtain a job • The number of people that participate to a course • The number of people hired by companies
Delivery channel	Virtual and physical
Alumni community	No
Success stories	No
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	Yes

POLAND

Coaching przedsiębiorczości - Kursy online

Training	<u>Coaching przedsiębiorczości - Kursy online</u> <u>Centrum Zmiany NOWE</u>
Topic	The training offer focuses on entrepreneurship and coaching for entrepreneurs.
Goals	The goal of the training offer is to provide an intensive 3-week online program for people who want to support entrepreneurs. It offers proven strategies, ready-made tools, and individual consultations.
Methodology	The methodology used in the training offer includes online coursework, applied learning projects, and individual consultations.
Sector of production	The training offer is not specific to a particular product sector. It aims to provide general entrepreneurship and coaching skills that can be applied across different industries.
Measuring results and evaluations	The courses include evaluations and reviews by previous participants, which can provide insight into the effectiveness of the courses.
Delivery channel	The delivery channel for the training program is virtual. The program is offered online.
Alumni community	No alumni community exists
Success stories	None
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	The training program is useful for freelancers and entrepreneurs who want to develop their coaching skills and support other entrepreneurs. The program provides practical tools and strategies that can be applied to different coaching situations, including those related to freelancing and entrepreneurship.

PFP - Polska Fundacja Przedsiębiorczości

Training	PFP - Polska Fundacja Przedsiębiorczości offers training programs for entrepreneurs, including freelancers. The foundation focuses on non-formal learning and face-to-face training methods, providing coaching and mentoring services
Topic	These courses cover a variety of topics, including finance, marketing, sales, technology, infrastructure, management and law.
Goals	The goals of the training programs offered by PFP are to provide entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their business ventures. The programs aim to help entrepreneurs develop their business plans, improve their marketing strategies, and enhance their financial management skills.
Methodology	The training programs offered by PFP focus on non-formal learning and face-to-face training methods. The foundation provides coaching and mentoring services to entrepreneurs, providing them with personalized guidance and support.
Sector of production	There is no indication that the training programs offered by PFP are specific to any particular product sector. The programs are designed to help entrepreneurs in any industry develop the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their business ventures.
Measuring results and evaluations	It is unclear how the outcomes/evaluations of the training programs offered by PFP are measured. However, the foundation provides coaching and mentoring services to entrepreneurs, which may include ongoing evaluation and feedback
Delivery channel	The delivery channel for the training programs offered by PFP is face-to-face, indicating that the delivery channel is physical
Alumni community	There is no detailed information but over 240,000 people have already participated in the Polish Enterprise Foundation programme.
Success stories	There is no information available regarding specific success stories related to the training programs offered by PFP. However, the foundation collaborates with organizations like Santander Bank Polska to organize free training courses.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	The training programs offered by PFP are useful for freelancers, as the foundation offers coaching and mentoring services to entrepreneurs, including those who work as freelancers

SPAIN

IE Business School – Madrid

Training	IE Business School – Madrid
Topic	It offers a variety of entrepreneurship programs and courses. They have a strong focus on innovation and entrepreneurship and offer programs training form short courses to full-time MBA programs.
Goals	The goals of IE Business School's training programs typically include providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of the chosen subject matter, enhancing their skills, and preparing them for success in their respective fields
Methodology	IE Business School often employs a combination of teaching methods, which may include lectures, case studies, group projects, workshops, and real-world experiences. They may also emphasize experiential learning and practical application of knowledge.
Sector of production	IE Business School places a significant emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation. They have entrepreneurship centers, incubators, and accelerators to support students and alumni in launching their own businesses. The specificity of product sectors may vary depending on the program. Some programs may be designed to cater to specific industries or sectors, while others may offer a broader business education.
Measuring results and evaluations	IE Business School typically evaluates participants' performance through a combination of assignments, exams, group projects, presentations, and other assessment methods. The specific evaluation criteria may vary depending on the program.
Delivery channel	IE Business School offers a mix of virtual and physical training programs. They have a strong online presence and offer many courses and resources virtually. However, some programs may require physical attendance at their campus in Madrid.
Alumni community	IE Business School has a strong alumni network with graduates in influential positions in businesses and organizations worldwide. Alumni often remain engaged with the school and contribute to its community.
Success stories	IE Business School has produced successful alumni who have gone on to achieve significant accomplishments in various industries. These success stories can often be found on their website and in their promotional materials.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	While IE Business School's programs are not specifically tailored for freelancers, many of their courses in entrepreneurship, digital marketing, and business management can be highly valuable for freelancers looking to enhance their business skills, market their services, and manage their freelance careers effectively.

Google Digital Garage - Online

Training	Google Digital Garage – Online
Topic	A range of free online courses and training programs on digital marketing, entrepreneurship, and business development.
Goals	The primary goals of Google Digital Garage are to provide learners with essential digital skills, help individuals and businesses grow their online presence, and support career development in the digital age.
Methodology	The Digital Garage is a non-profit nationwide programme from Google delivering free digital skills training via an online learning platform. This platform provides individuals with a tailored training plan to learn digital skills, completely for free. Google Digital Garage employs a flexible and user-friendly online learning platform. Courses often include video lectures, quizzes, hands-on exercises, and practical examples to help participants gain practical knowledge
Sector of production	They have services for freelancers and the courses cover topics like online marketing, website development, and digital skills, which are highly relevant for freelancers looking to market their services online and improve their online presence.
Measuring results and evaluations	Course progress and understanding are typically measured through quizzes and assessments that are integrated into the online courses. Participants receive certificates upon course completion, and their performance in quizzes and assessments contributes to the final certification
Delivery channel	Its an online platform, where freelancers in Spain can access these resources from anywhere with an internet conection.
Alumni community	Google Digital Garage does not have a formal alumni community. However, learners can connect and engage with others through various online platforms and communities related to digital marketing and entrepreneurship.
Success stories	Google Digital Garage showcases success stories on its website, featuring individuals and businesses that have benefited from the training. These stories often highlight how the skills learned through the platform have positively impacted careers and businesses
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	Google Digital Garage's training is highly useful for freelancers. Courses in digital marketing, online advertising, website development, and data analytics can help freelancers build their online presence, market their services, and acquire valuable digital skills to enhance their freelance careers

IESE Business School

Training	<u>IESE Business School</u>
Topic	Entrepreneurship and Freelancer Support
Goals	The program aims to equip aspiring entrepreneurs and freelancers with the knowledge and skills needed to start and manage their own businesses successfully. It also provides valuable resources for networking and growth.
Methodology	The program offers a combination of classroom sessions, workshops, and online learning. Participants work on real business projects, receive mentorship, and have access to a wide range of resources.
Sector of production	The program is designed to be applicable across various industries and is not specific to a particular sector.
Measuring results and evaluations	Performance is assessed through project presentations, case studies, and exams. Additionally, participants are encouraged to measure their success through the growth and sustainability of their own businesses.
Delivery channel	The program offers both physical classes at the IESE Business School campus in Barcelona and virtual classes for remote learners.
Alumni community	Yes, IESE Business School has an active alumni network that provides ongoing support, networking opportunities, and access to resources.
Success stories	Several successful entrepreneurs and freelancers have graduated from IESE Business School programs and gone on to create thriving businesses in Spain and beyond. These success stories are often shared as inspiration for current and prospective participants.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	This training is highly useful for freelancers looking to transition into entrepreneurship or those seeking to expand their freelance business into a full-fledged company.

Crehana

Training	<u>Crehana</u>
Topic	Online Entrepreneurship Courses
Goals	Crehana offers a range of online courses designed to help individuals kickstart their entrepreneurial journey. The courses cover various aspects of entrepreneurship, from idea generation to business development.
Methodology	Crehana's courses are delivered entirely online and include video lessons, quizzes, assignments, and projects. Participants can learn at their own pace and access course materials from anywhere.
Sector of production	The courses are designed to be adaptable to different product sectors and business models, making them suitable for a broad audience.
Measuring results and evaluations	Participants receive certificates upon course completion. Success is measured by the skills acquired and the ability to apply them in practical business situations.
Delivery channel	Crehana's courses are delivered through a virtual platform, making them accessible to freelancers and aspiring entrepreneurs across Spain.
Alumni community	Crehana offers an online community where participants can connect, share experiences, and collaborate on projects. It's a valuable resource for networking and support.
Success stories	Crehana showcases success stories of individuals who have taken their courses and used the knowledge gained to launch successful businesses or freelance careers.

Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	Crehana's online entrepreneurship courses are particularly useful for freelancers looking to transition into entrepreneurship or expand their skills to better manage their freelance careers.
--	--

GREECE

Building Your Freelancing Career Specialization

Training offer	Coursera – Worldwide: Building Your Freelancing Career Specialization by the California Institute of the Arts.
Topic	It is about unlocking the potential of a learner’s skills by launching a successful freelancing business. This topic delves into the art of transforming their expertise into a profitable venture, empowering them to take control of their career. By learning the essentials of becoming their own boss, from monetizing their talents to enjoying the unparalleled freedom that freelancing offers.
Goals	The certificate program aims to equip participants with sought-after skills, taught by both university and industry experts. Through hands-on projects, students will master specific subjects or tools, gaining a deep understanding of key concepts. Upon successful completion of the program, participants will earn a certificate from the California Institute of the Arts.
Methodology	Coursera partnered with CALARTS to offer this online course that is academically rigorous and practically relevant. The platform employs a modular approach, featuring video lectures, quizzes, peer-reviewed assignments, and hands-on projects to ensure comprehensive learning. Students can interact with peers through discussion forums, and upon successful completion of the specialization, they earn a certificate.
Sector of production	While this specialization is generally designed to equip learners with skills that are applicable across various industries, it is not typically limited to a specific product sector. The courses in the specialization cover essential topics like business planning, marketing, client acquisition, and financial management, all tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs and freelancers.
Measuring results and evaluations	Coursera evaluates outcomes in this specialization through a mix of multiple-choice quizzes, peer-reviewed assignments, and hands-on projects. Upon successfully completing all assessments and courses within the specialization, students earn a certificate, serving as a tangible indicator of subject mastery. Course ratings and reviews further provide feedback on the effectiveness of the specialization.
Delivery channel	The specialization’s delivery channel is virtual. It is offered online, allowing learners to access the material from anywhere with an internet connection.
Alumni community	Coursera itself does not formally maintain alumni. However, learners may connect with each other through course discussion forums, LinkedIn groups, or other social media platforms to form informal networks.
Success stories	Yes, Coursera features success stories and testimonials on its website and blog, showcasing learners who have benefited from the specialization. These stories range from career advancements and job changes to personal growth and the acquisition of new skills. Some learners have even gone on to start their own businesses after completing this specialization.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	This program is custom designed for freelancers, offering valuable insights for those aiming to sharpen their business acumen, and manage their freelance careers successfully.

Digital Freelancer Nanodegree

Training offer	Udacity – Worldwide, Digital Freelancer Nanodegree by Udacity
----------------	---

Topic	Participants in the program tap into the rising demand for digital freelancers by establishing their personal brand and launching a thriving online business.
Goals	Upon completing this program, graduates will possess the skills to effectively find and market their services to clients, accurately scope out projects to set client expectations and establish pricing, manage client relationships throughout the project lifecycle, and ensure timely billing and payment collection.
Methodology	All Udacity's programs offer a comprehensive learning experience that includes real-world projects and immersive content developed in collaboration with leading companies. Learners receive immediate assistance directly within the virtual classroom, enhancing their educational journey. Additionally, the programs provide access to GitHub portfolio reviews and LinkedIn profile optimization, equipping learners with the tools they need to advance their careers and secure high-paying roles.
Sector of production	While Udacity does focus heavily on tech-related fields, the skills learned can often be applied across a range of industries that use similar technologies or methodologies.
Measuring results and evaluations	Udacity evaluates learner outcomes through real-world projects reviewed by experts, quizzes, and occasional exams. Mentor support offers ongoing assessment, while GitHub portfolio reviews provide technical evaluation. Upon successfully completing a Nanodegree program, learners receive a certificate as proof of their skill mastery and readiness for the job market.
Delivery channel	The Nanodegree's delivery channel is virtual. It is offered online, allowing learners to access the material from anywhere with an internet connection.
Alumni community	Udacity does have an alumni network that allows graduates of their Nanodegree programs to connect, network, and share opportunities. They often facilitate this through online platforms like LinkedIn groups, alumni webinars, and virtual meetups. Some local communities may also organize in-person events or study sessions.
Success stories	Yes, Udacity features success stories and testimonials on its website, showcasing learners who have benefited from the Nanodegree. These stories range from career advancements to personal growth.
Level of usefulness for freelancers or specific training for freelancers	This program is custom designed for digital freelancers, offering valuable insights for those aiming to sharpen their digital business acumen, and manage their digital freelance careers successfully.

Conclusion

Overall, entrepreneurship training opportunities are available in various regions and cover different topics. General entrepreneurship programmes provide a foundation for aspiring entrepreneurs, including freelancers, by offering useful skills and knowledge. In addition, digital marketing and online presence courses are widely accessible and very useful for freelancers wishing to improve their online visibility and acquire clients.

In general, sector-specific courses are mainly for niche sectors. Coaching and mentoring programmes as well as business management and innovation programmes are widespread and offer comprehensive training for business growth, benefiting freelancers wishing to move up a level. However, there are still many elements of training curricula that need to be developed for a freelance audience:

- **Specific Programs-Customized Freelancer:** There's a need for more specialized training designed exclusively for freelancers, addressing their unique challenges, including client management, pricing, and project scoping.
- **Freelancer Networking and Community Building:** Many programs lack formal alumni communities, requiring the development of networks and communities specifically for freelancers, offering support, collaboration opportunities, and mentorship.
- **Evaluation Custom fitted to Freelancers:** Existing programs often measure outcomes like job placements and connections to companies, which may not align with freelancers' success indicators. Customized evaluation measurements for freelancers are essential.
- **Specialty Field Freelancer Training:** Specialized training for freelancers in various niche sectors, such as healthcare, art, or sustainability, is required to cater to their unique needs and opportunities.
- **Online Platforms for Freelancer Training:** More online platforms could be developed offering comprehensive training for freelancers, covering business management and specialized skills relevant to freelancing just like Freelance Business pointed out.
- **Mentorship and Practical Application:** Freelancers often seek hands-on guidance and mentorship. Programs should incorporate mentorship components and opportunities for practical application to enhance freelancers' success.

To sum up, there are many entrepreneurship-related training options but fitted and customized programs specifically designed for freelancers lack the market. These programs should address freelancers' unique challenges and opportunities and provide support through communities and mentorship.

Chapter 4 - The Business Model for the Freelance Incubator



Source: Image by vectorjuice on Freepik (<https://bit.ly/3VAPt1w>)

Introduction

A Business Model is a conceptual tool used to describe how an organisation 'creates, distributes and captures value'. Therefore, it can be defined as the set of organisational practices and strategic solutions used for achieving competitive advantage within the market.

This tool has to be flexible and dynamic, and it is fundamental for creating the basis of any entrepreneurial activity. This handbook brings together all the reflections and suggestions on the Freelance Incubator project, in order to create a Business Model available to all those who want to implement it, either in its virtual or 'physical' version.

Regardless of the field of activity, for a business to be successful it is essential to create value for its customers: for this very reason, the Business Model is the first document that must be developed and will be useful in strategic planning. Each organisation creates value for its customers when it helps them to:

- Perform a valuable task
- Satisfy a wish
- Solve a problem.

To understand what the Business Model is, it is useful to think of it as the 'operating system' of an organisation, while the individual processes represent the programmes and applications. In other words, it is the logical structure upstream: it defines the relationships and behaviour of each individual element and enables smooth, optimized and productive working.

The Business Model concept is relatively recent: the terminology was first mentioned in 1957 in the article "On the construction of a multi-person, multi-stage business game"¹

It was only towards the end of the 1990s that the concept of the Business Model gained importance, attracting increasing interest from the scientific community and beyond. As already written, the most famous definition of the Business Model is that of the Swiss scholar Alexander Osterwalder, who described it as "the conceptual tool that describes how a company creates, distributes and captures value".

In this respect, all experts in the field agree that the Business Model should consist of the following elements:

1. The organisation's **value proposition**
2. The **market segments** it addresses
3. The structure of its **value chain**
4. The **mechanisms of value acquisition**
5. The ways in which all the elements listed above are linked in an architecture specific to the individual organisation or company.

In summary, then, the Business Model illustrates an organisation's value proposition by clearly identifying its target audience, the main suppliers from which it obtains the materials it needs for production, the characteristics of the production process it wishes to implement, etc.

¹ "On the construction of a multi-person, multi-stage business game"

(https://www.jstor.org/stable/167246?casa_token=00wjB7zh_M4AAAAA:oCsFDIQ78yqzzHN2uvLVjGSg9X3kRvYAKk0fGrR_kaGiHSwjPq-SiUysrshdhWyzHsYBfgeFNqmhWqI22M3nCXWIAch452YCgfd0OBx80sME_kjqouT)

The Business Model should be very dynamic and flexible because, however successful it may be, it would be unthinkable to believe that it can be so forever. In order to continue to create value, it must be changed and adapted to changing conditions inside and outside the organisation itself. The Business Model is the reference point where the organisational and strategic solutions through which an organisation acquires competitive advantage are gathered.

The Business Model:

- provides organisations (whether for-profit or not-for-profit) with guidelines through which innovation is transformed into value acquisition, through a specific strategy capable of providing a competitive advantage over the competition;
- defines an organisational model that makes it possible to share knowledge within the organisation and to make the most of human resources, fostering ideal conditions for stimulating innovation;
- identifies relationships of interaction and cooperation with suppliers and customers;
- establishes methods and tools for analysing results on an ongoing basis.

The Business Model Canvas

There are several tools to help entrepreneurs and start uppers to clearly and concisely represent their value proposition. The most famous of the various visualisation tools and methods is undoubtedly the Business Model Canvas, invented by Alexander Osterwalder.

This model revolutionised the way of representing a business model: thanks to it, everyone has the possibility to understand the complex elements that concern the functioning of an entire organisation, in a simple and extremely intuitive way. The Canvas Model is based on a visual language that is easy-to-learn and accessible beyond the professional background. It is structured in 9 blocks that make it possible to visualise and imagine the constituent elements of each Business Model thanks to a simplified graphic representation of the main activities underlying the business. This allows a clear visualisation of its logic for creating, distributing and capturing value. Through the Business Model Canvas, it is possible to obtain an overall representation of the business reality as a large ecosystem of interdependent activities. In the upper part of the model, non-financial information such as key resources, partners, distribution channels and consumer segments are represented; the lower part, on the other hand, is dedicated to financial information such as the cost and revenue structure. At the core of the model is the value proposition that an organisation makes to the market, expressed in terms of the benefits, tangible or intangible, that consumers can obtain from the purchase and use of a specific product or service.

All these elements together provide a homogeneous view of the key factors of an organisation:

- who their customers are, and what they think;
- the value proposition;
- the channels to interact with customers.
- the relationships established with customers.
- the revenue streams;
- key strategies and resources;
- partnerships and key activities;

- streams and revenues.

The Business Model Canvas				
Designed for		Designed by		Date
				Rev.
Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Propositions	Customer Relationships	Customer Segments
	Key Resources		Channels	
Cost Structure			Revenue	

This model is an excellent tool for gaining a clear vision of each business project and allows you to understand what needs to be innovated and where to intervene in order to enhance and increase your services and/or products.

The Customer segments

The Customer Segments block of the Business Model Canvas describes the different groups of people and/or organisations addressed by the organisation. Defining your Business Model from this block is crucial: it allows you to build the package of products and services you intend to offer, basing them on the specific needs of each specific customer cluster.

This block mainly answers two questions:

- Who are you creating value for?
- Who are your most important customers?

Customers are the heart of any business model: without them, the organisation itself would not exist. In order to best serve them, it is necessary to know them and to be able to identify precisely which customer segments to target.

Segments - larger or smaller - can be recognised on the basis of:

- common requirements;
- similar behaviour;
- similarity characters;
- type of sector in which they operate.

Beyond geographical, social or demographic characteristics, it is advisable to get into the shoes of your customers and draw a psycho-graphic profile of them, taking into account various 'psychological' aspects:

- what is the propensity for risk and innovation of our interlocutors;
- where, when, according to which criteria they buy;
- what they do in their free time, who influences them, what makes them feel good and what makes them feel bad;
- what makes them exclaim “Wow!”, etc.

The benefit of this approach is that the Business Model is strengthened: you start with a customer profile that allows you to better understand what customers are really willing to pay for.

From another point of view, we can say that customer groups represent distinct segments if:

- their needs require a distinct offer;
- they are reached through different distribution channels;
- they require different types of relationships;
- they have different profitability;
- they are willing to pay for different aspects of the offer.

This block is also helpful in identifying the target market, which is, in the case of the DIGIfreelancer project and the Freelance Incubator, a mass market. In other words, a market consists of one large segment because the value offered, the distribution channels and the relationships focus on customers with similar needs and problems.

The DIGIfreelancer project mainly targets freelancers operating in Europe. The partnership decided to target this market segment because the Freelance Economy is a reality that is gaining more and more relevance in the world of work and business, thanks to new technologies and social changes. Over the last two decades, the freelancing phenomenon has taken on major proportions, thanks to the fast-growing potential of the Internet and the advantages companies gain from working with 'on-demand talent'. The financial crisis of 2008 marked the introduction of this new type of 'service provider' onto the market. The Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent Big Quit phenomenon have turned or will turn many employees into freelancers.

The number of people saying they are interested in becoming freelancers is increasing, but without the right preparation - not just for the technical side of the job, but also for the dynamics of entrepreneurship - there is a risk of ending up with a freelance economy that is neither sustainable nor competitive.

According to various researches, over the next five years, more than half of the talent in companies will choose self-employment. Of those who will remain employed, a large proportion will develop side projects as freelancers.

The freelance economy is fuelled by three technological factors:

- 1) **The Internet** has made it possible to connect with anyone in the world.
- 2) **Remote working tools** have made it possible to collaborate with anyone in the world.
- 3) **Workflow tools** (contracts, payments, project management) have made it possible for freelancers to run scalable and profitable individual businesses.

Outsourcing to external providers is nothing new. But historically, outsourcing has needed staffing companies, consultants, and temporary agencies. The innovation of the freelance economy is that companies can now reach the talent they need directly, instead of going through an intermediary (agency, HR company). They can connect, communicate, collaborate and contract directly with a freelancer anywhere in the world.

However, researchers have sounded the alarm about the many challenges at work and the employment conditions it creates, which have been exacerbated by the Pandemic: irregular wages, health and safety issues and unpredictable working hours. Freelancers face market fluctuations and

are committed to constantly updating their professional and entrepreneurial skills, moving in a context of a lack of specific definitions where they chase the business model defined for larger organisations, start-ups or companies.

Although digital professions have found their natural outlet in the formula of freelance work since their inception, it is true that there is an emerging trend that sees the creation of freelancers in every field of service, whether craft or intellectual. The number of freelancers is constantly growing in Europe and worldwide, but neither the policies to support and protect the category nor the training opportunities to increase not only their number but also their quality in terms of entrepreneurial skills are growing at the same rate.

The objective of this project is the creation of a virtual Incubator for freelancers that can be the reference for all consultancy or training needs related to individual entrepreneurial development, including the acquisition of those digital skills that represent the success factor in an open and digital market.

Looking at the acceleration programmes developed and implemented so far, it can be noticed that they are focused on a single category of clients: start-ups, sometimes divided into cohorts or classes depending on the sector they target. Some accelerators particularly focus on entrepreneurs who have a business model when they start a business, but it is often partially formed and incomplete. Often, they have not yet developed a value proposition and sometimes they are just someone with an idea.

As already mentioned, the freelance Incubator that will be developed within the DIGIfreelancer project will target the freelance segment, which is divided as follows:

- wannabe freelancers (those entering the world of work for the first time),
- wannabe freelancers (coming from previous professional experience as employees),
- freelancers in business for less than two years,
- freelancers who have been in business for more than two years and want to develop their business and grow in innovation and competitiveness,
- freelancers offering services to other freelancers.

For each of these clients, we developed a buyer persona, i.e., a fictitious representation of a typical client, created on the basis of the data collected through the survey we submitted to European freelancers in the first phase of the project, but also thanks to our knowledge of the sector in general. The buyer personas have been developed taking into account not only their socio-demographic characteristics, but also their psychographic and behavioural characteristics.



CATEGORY: wannabe freelancers (those entering the world of work for the first time)

Name	Andrej
Age	24 years old
Family status	Single
Education	Graduated in Political Science
Provenance	Poland

PSYCHOGRAPHIC DATA

- **Personality** - Andrej is an enthusiast; from a young age he has been involved in many different projects (at school, church, sports), actively contributing. He is an outgoing boy who loves being with his friends and meeting new people. He loves taking the initiative and attending parties, where he can have fun with other young people like him.
- **Values** - independence, professionalism, friendship, innovation, freedom.
- **Bias** - he grew up with the idea that only those from wealthy families can be entrepreneurs; however, his desire for freedom drives him to try freelancing and work hard to realise his projects. He believes he can learn everything 'on the job' and completed university just to please his parents. He does not like studying and thinks that working in the IT world is not necessary. That is why he chose a generalist faculty.
- **Fears** - He is afraid that he will not be able to earn enough money and consequently will not be able to lead the lifestyle he wants without the financial support of his parents, who supported him during university.
- **Interests** – Passionate about computers since childhood, he likes to spend his time playing video games, programming websites and editing videos (which he often posts on his social channels). Sports: he plays football with friends at least once a week and he attends a gym regularly.
- **Lifestyle** - he has recently graduated and has been living with some flatmates for a few years. He has always been supported financially by his parents, but during his university studies he did various odd jobs to help pay for his studies. He likes to travel and everything he saves is devoted to organising trips with friends or weekends abroad. He always travels backpacking and loves to read, especially comics, but also some historical novels.

NEEDS, GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS

He needs to build his project on a solid foundation to have more confidence that it can become a real profession. He wants to do a job he enjoys and turn his youthful passions into a profession, but he does not want to work for an agency, because he would like to feel free and manage his own time.

DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA

He wants effective solutions that bring him results in a short time. The economic factor weighs heavily on his decisions. He prefers paths that allow him to meet people and make new friends.

BARRIERS TO PURCHASE

Paths that are too expensive and do not bring immediate results. The idea of hard work does not sound appealing to him, even if it is needed to realise a project he loves.



CATEGORY: wannabe freelancers (coming from previous professional experience as employees)

Name	Giovanna
Age	40 years old
Family status	Married, two children
Education	Bachelor's degree in Law
Provenance	Italy

PSYCHOGRAPHIC DATA

- **Personality** - Giovanna is an ambitious and determined young woman. She is sociable and extremely ironic. She is involved in voluntary work and passionately follows her children's extracurricular activities. She is always ready to lend a hand to those who ask her for help or to people she thinks are in difficulty. Sometimes she is considered intrusive, but she considers herself extremely empathetic.
- **Values** - Family, loyalty, commitment, competence, effectiveness.
- **Bias**- She grew up in a family with the cult of the permanent job and made a career out of it despite not really liking working as a lawyer. She does not believe in solutions that seem too good to be true.
- **Fears** - She wants to change her job and turn her passion for social media and writing into a profession; she is afraid that she will not be able to earn as much as she earns today as an employee. She is afraid of not being good enough, even though her friends tell her she has what it takes.
- **Interests** - She reads many novels and likes to go to the cinema with her husband or friends. She attends exhibitions and conferences about the world of communication, marketing and social media. She spends a lot of time on Instagram and on her cooking blog, where she posts the recipes she experiments with, especially at weekends.
- **Lifestyle** - She has built a family like the ones that can be seen in advertisements: she takes care of her husband and children but does not give up her free time for herself. She wants to be a devoted mother and loves to travel with her family, although she does not disdain being quiet at home and enjoying her cooking, especially on Sundays. She has never had financial problems: during her university days she devoted herself to her studies and her parents provided for her needs; today both she and her husband earn a good income and can afford various leisure activities.

NEEDS, GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS

Doing work that makes her feel good (going to the office on Monday mornings has become a burden); she wants to do a job with an impact on others and on herself; she is motivated by the desire to experiment and take on new challenges. She wants to have more decision-making power over her own time.

DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA

Quality of the product/service; when she has to make major investments, she relies heavily on the opinion of people close to her. She seeks information and compares products/services.

BARRIERS TO PURCHASE

She does not feel up to certain situations, so she does not know if these are the right opportunities for her; she feels that she does not have much time, that it is a bit late to seize certain opportunities. She does not have much time to devote to training even though she would like it very much.


CATEGORY: freelancers in activity for less than two years

Name	Maria Pilar
Age	30 years old
Family status	Single
Education	Graduated in Communication Sciences
Provenance	Spain

PSYCHOGRAPHIC DATA

- **Personality** - Maria Pilar can be described as a 'free spirit'. Working in a company was difficult for her because she found it hard to adapt to office hours, routine and also the fact that she had to work for clients she would never have chosen. She is stubborn and when she sets her mind to a project, she always manages to achieve it. She also feels that she is fragile and very often doubts her abilities.
- **Values** - Ecology, spirituality, commitment, change, love.
- **Bias** - She believes that those who make a lot of money do so in an unclean way; she does not like to sell, sometimes perceives money as something 'dirty' and for this reason she finds it hard to solicit her clients when they are late with payments; she believes that she will never be able to make a lot of money and at the same time have a sustainable lifestyle.
- **Fears** – Her business does not seem to want to grow in any way. She works hard, the flow of customers is constant, but she never manages to put anything aside and is therefore worried about her future.
- **Interests** - Mindfulness enthusiast, practises yoga and often attends seminars on holistic disciplines. She reads tarot cards to her friends for fun, likes to spend whole hours in the library and watch her favourite series on TV (she has a passion for K-dramas).
- **Lifestyle** - She is vegetarian and always looking for recipes to experiment with. She loves being in nature and spends her weekends outdoors as much as possible. She owns her own flat, inherited from her grandmother, but has little savings in the bank. She always tries to have a sustainable lifestyle. She buys little and recycles a lot. She goes out very little, usually to go to the gym or to the cinema. She travels little but lives in a very beautiful city and enjoys discovering new and interesting corners of it.

NEEDS, GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS

She feels the need to make up with money; she knows she is good at her job, and would like to reach as many clients as possible, to be able to support as many people through her services. She does not want to come back to the company where she worked for three years, which she decided to leave due to a very heavy burnout. Her goal is to live a balanced and healthy life, where work is an important part but must not take over.

DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA

She is very trusting of the reviews she reads or the recommendations of friends; she has 'landmarks' on Instagram that she follows like oracles: if these pages suggest a product or service, she looks for ways to get it (if it is within her budget).

BARRIERS TO PURCHASE

Money is her biggest concern, so she sometimes gives up on something that she considers too expensive (even though this is not actually the case). If a brand does not respect its founding values, she stops following it. The word 'entrepreneur' scares her, and although she would like to earn more money, she is not sure that the way forward is to expose herself more on social media and push the sales of her services (which she sometimes considers too exhausting for her).



CATEGORY: freelancers in activity for more than two years who want to develop their business and grow in innovation and competitiveness

Name	Yanni
Age	35 years old
Family status	Married, one child
Education	Professional studies in graphic design
Provenance	Greece

PSYCHOGRAPHIC DATA

- **Personality** - Yanni likes change, in fact to him it is essential for a good life. He has done a thousand different jobs, always looking for something new and stimulating. Fatigue does not frighten him, but he wants to start thinking about his future: even if he is really busy with his work as a video maker, he would like to have more free time to spend with his family. He is kind and outgoing, very attentive to the needs of those around him, ready to sacrifice himself for those in need.
- **Values** - Family, innovation, pleasure, money, independence.
- **Bias** - He is very detail-oriented and therefore does not trust anyone who does not clearly express all the characteristics of a service or product. He thinks that his qualification will not allow him to become a great entrepreneur, and he is not sure he can do it.
- **Fears** - Although he is happy with his business, he would like something more. Not only in terms of earning money, but also in terms of professional growth. He would like to take his business to a new level, and maybe even hire employees, but he is afraid of going 'over the top'. If his choices turn out to be wrong, he would put his family's future at risk.
- **Interests** -He loves being outdoors and hiking. He has always considered himself a 'nerd' and is fascinated by the latest technologies. Ever since people started talking about AI, he has read and studied as much as he can, and has also experimented a lot, until he has become a real expert.
- **Lifestyle** - he achieved a good level of income but would like a better balance between life and work. The long hours spent in front of the computer are starting to weigh on him a bit, and he would like to spend more time outdoors with his family. He often spends his weekends working, but as soon as he can, he goes hiking in the mountains, taking his wife and son with him (who are not always enthusiastic about it, but gladly do it as long as they are with him).

NEEDS, GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS

He wants to grow his business, for personal satisfaction and to offer his family better living conditions. He loves change, but has finally found a job he is passionate about and would like to grow in his field. His goal is to expand his business in order to be able to afford one or two co-workers to delegate most of the work, so that he can get more free time.

DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA

He chooses on the basis of hard data: he needs to know all the features of a product or service, and he needs a free demo or test before buying anything.

BARRIERS TO PURCHASE

He knows what his priorities are, is not interested in the superfluous and prefers simple and clear services to complex offers that, in his opinion, 'hide something'.



CATEGORY: freelancers offering services to other freelancers

Name	Philippe
Age	45 years old
Family status	Married, 3 children
Education	Graduated in Economics Sciences
Provenance	Belgium

PSYCHOGRAPHIC DATA

- **Personality** - He is described by everyone as a serious and reliable professional, and is happy about this.
- **Values** - Reliability, generosity, family, spirituality, professionalism
- **Bias** - He grew up in a very religious family with strong values and a very strong work culture. Although he is a freelancer, he has a hard core of 'big' and continuous clients who make him feel safe. He does not like new things and is wary of professionals who do not plan their business carefully.
- **Fears** – In order to take on new clients he needs to be reassured about the nature and duration of contracts; he is afraid of investing too much time in helping others without a real return for himself. He is afraid that if he does not overcome his laziness and network in a more structured way, he will end up losing clients and opportunities. The advent of so many young professionals puts him in crisis because he is not sure he can keep up with the times, especially from a technological point of view.
- **Interests** - He does not particularly enjoy doing sports, but he feels that the years are beginning to take their toll and so he tries to go to the gym more because he feels compelled than for pleasure. He prefers watching sports on TV rather than practising it. He therefore leads a fairly sedentary lifestyle but loves going out with his wife to the cinema or shopping. He does not read much, just the necessary updates for his job. He is passionate about Lego constructions: a love he carried with him since childhood.
- **Lifestyle** - He describes himself as wealthy: he has everything he needs to take care of his family and to indulge himself. He spends a lot on collectible Lego and on his children's recreational activities. He does not particularly like to travel, when he does it is to meet the needs of his wife and children, but he loves to be with them and therefore willingly overcomes his laziness if it means being with his loved ones. He takes care of his elderly parents, has a pension plan and various insurances that give him a feeling of security for the future.

NEEDS, GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS

He wants to maintain his lifestyle and secure a solid future. He does not like setbacks and therefore plans everything down to the last detail. His main motivation is to take care of the people he loves so that they do not lack anything.

DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA

The more solid and clear an offer is, the more inclined he is to buy. He wants to make innovative choices for his work but without risking too much. If an opportunity is perceived as too risky, he renounces.

BARRIERS TO PURCHASE

The human factor is crucial for him: he needs to be sure that he can relate to a person and not a machine. Even when buying online, he needs to feel coddled and reassured.

The Value Proposition

We have seen that the key concept of every Business Model is the Value Proposition (it is no coincidence that it is right at the heart of the Business Model Canvas). But how is this value measured? The value perceived by the customer is the result of the difference between benefits received and costs incurred.

Those who buy a product or service must have the perception that what they receive is much more than what they pay for: economic value is consequently not the only thing at stake. Maintaining a high-quality standard and charging an affordable final price is, for example, one of the best ways to increase perceived value.

Value perception is one of the most important elements in pricing. If customers do not perceive good value for money, the freelancer has no pricing power: he cannot raise prices to maintain profitability and not lose many customers. However, if customers perceive that they are getting good value for money, they will remain loyal despite price increases.

Value is not a single element (the price), but comprises a number of attributes of its goods and services for which customers are willing to pay. Value is provided by the low cost of goods or services, their highly differentiated characteristics or a combination of low cost and high differentiation, compared to competing goods or services.

Value can be divided into 7 components:

- Service
- Response
- Variety
- Knowledge
- Quality
- Guarantee
- Price.

Since price is only one component of value, experienced marketers try to maintain perceived value by ensuring that the characteristics of other variables are emphasised to compensate for price increases.

It is crucial that the value proposition the organisation presents to its stakeholders meets their needs and challenges. The **value proposition of the freelance incubator is to accelerate their growth and development**. Through its proposed programmes, it seeks to add value to freelancers' businesses, helping them to adapt quickly to market fluctuations and learn the right mindset.

The implementation of the DIGIfreelancer incubator envisages the creation of a digital platform where freelancers can access in order to obtain:

1. high-level entrepreneurial training,
2. digital literacy,
3. targeted consultancy,
4. mentoring and accountability services,
5. a network of qualified professionals at discounted rates to guide and develop the business (accountants, lawyers, digital experts, photographers, branding experts, web designers, growth hackers, etc.),
6. networking opportunities with other freelancers to start collaborations.

The training proposal aimed at freelancers is limited, often borrowed from training for companies or start-ups and does not consider all the needs of freelancers.

DIGIfreelancer aims to create a reference model to provide adequate entrepreneurial and digital training for freelancers, so that they can start or manage a continuous and valuable professional activity, considering that the population of new freelancers is mainly made up of women, young people at their first experience and over 50s facing their second professional life.

Strengthening the freelance segment would allow:

- to reduce the 'mortality rate' of freelancers, with positive effects on general unemployment,
- to reduce the use of income support policies for employees who find themselves out of work,
- to improve the overall income of the category,
- to reduce 'undeclared work' in favour of more stable and well-paid jobs,
- to promote a work style with a better work-life balance,
- to reduce the dissatisfaction rate of workers, who would be engaged in a job that they are passionate about and that allows them to exploit their talents.

The proposed product

Products are - technically - the set of goods and services that create value for customers by satisfying their needs and desires. The product that the incubator makes available to freelancers is the **accelerator programme**.

The proposal for acceleration consists of five key stages:

- 1) The selection process
- 2) The agreement
- 3) The programme
- 4) The completion
- 5) The alumni programme

The **selection process** defines the methods for scouting and selecting freelancers to be admitted to the accelerator programme. The selection process may involve various techniques, such as interviews, presentation events and question-and-answer sessions. The idea is to create an annual call for applications through which a limited number of freelancers will be selected and will have access to the programme at no cost. Other freelancers (in larger numbers) will have access to the programme by paying an entry fee that will be extremely low compared to the quality and value of the services offered.

A very valuable element would be to replicate what happens today in start-up incubators, i.e., to offer, in addition to the incubation programme, a small amount of funding that allows selected freelancers to make investments that they would otherwise not be able to afford, such as a professional website, a branding photo shoot, contractual advice, etc. This service will be possible to the extent that the incubator is able to reach agreements with companies and partners willing to provide 'scholarships' for freelancers. The benefit for these partners will be the return in terms of image: their support for freelancers can be part of their CSR activities, and it will also guarantee them access to a pool of professional and highly specialised consultants in case they need them in the future.

The **agreement** defines the start of the acceleration programme and determines the contractual links between the selected freelancers and the accelerator.

The **accelerator programme** consists of a collection of services that the accelerator provides to freelancers to foster their growth. The programme can be closed with a demo day where investors and business angels can be invited to create funding opportunities, along with mentors and alumni, entrepreneurs, other freelancers and representatives of the organisation to explore possibilities for further collaboration.

The programme must have these characteristics (which will be explained in detail in the following chapters):

- Limited duration: the duration of the programme may vary from three to six months to instil a sense of urgency and thus encourage quick results.
- Education and training: the accelerator will organise specific training to be attended by all participating freelancers. Lectures, seminars, workshops, masterclasses and business games will cover a wide range of topics, from finance to marketing, logistics to legal and HR aspects, among others.
- Support from the management team: freelancers admitted to the programme will have regular interactions with the management team, which can review progress and provide advice. These regular meetings with the accelerator's management team will generate mutual trust, providing freelancers with support and enabling constant review of their progress.
- A programme of events, expert workshops and inspiring lectures.

- Structured mentoring: mentorship is one of the most valuable aspects of accelerator programmes. Accelerator directors and programme mentors will meet (virtually or in live appointments) periodically with freelancers to provide guidance, create networking opportunities and build mutual trust with individuals who could potentially become investors and advisors at a later stage.
- Co-location: in the case of creating a 'physical' incubator, co-location in a shared open space could encourage learning and collaboration among freelancers; after the incubation period, freelancers can rent the space at favourable prices, and this could become a livelihood for the incubator.
- Networking opportunities: networking opportunities can be created with experts and professionals, as well as with other entrepreneurs.
- Funding: access to investors is a service that could be implemented for those freelancers who, at the end of the incubation period, decide to open a start-up. Even for those who do not wish to open a company, it may be interesting to provide financing alternatives (e.g., through participation in tenders or similar) and awareness of the effects of financial choices.

The added value of training

The training offer for freelancers in the EU countries is wide and varied, but it often does not take into account the real objectives of such training in terms of developing an entrepreneurial mindset. Freelancers turn to different structures for their digital training, but without a structured 'curriculum' aimed at their overall professional development as entrepreneurs.

DIGIfreelancer aims to provide a broader view of the digital skills to be developed, not only to improve marketing and communication competences, but also to facilitate access to digital tools and skills that improve processes, systems and work organisation.

Nowadays, freelancers invest in training, but above all in marketing and communication, and they consider some resources that would be essential for the development of their work in a scalable perspective, such as training in the use of e-invoicing tools, to be of little use or inaccessible:

- training in the use of tools such as CRM (Customer Relationship Management)
- use of an advanced management platform,
- training in the use of software to increase traffic, convert visitors, launch inbound marketing campaigns - lead generation, marketing automation, analysis,
- training in the use of CRM software for sales, to gain deeper knowledge of potential customers, automate tasks and close deals faster,
- training in the use of CMS content management systems,
- training on organisation, time management, business planning, through the use of specific software (e.g., for scheduling meetings or taking appointments with customers and organising them),
- specific training on the creation of funnels through appropriate software (easy to use, meeting the needs and workloads of a freelancer),
- training in the field of growth hacking with special attention to the reality of freelancing (very different from that of a start-up or a company).

The project aims to create a reference model for VET trainers for an adequate and specific preparation on entrepreneurial and digital skills for freelancers.

Networking, mentoring, exchange of skills and experiences

Mentorship is one of the most significant values that an accelerator programme can provide to freelancers. Mentors are experienced entrepreneurs who are carefully screened before being included in the accelerator programme. Selection characteristics will be their unique expertise gained through experience, their network and their knowledge of specific market sectors. Not all successful entrepreneurs can serve as good mentors: a strong predisposition and willingness to help new entrepreneurs achieve success are required.

The DIGIfreelancer incubator for freelancers aims to build a dense network that can give value to the project through the continuous exchange of experiences and the support of qualified and specialised entrepreneurs. For this reason, networking events will be organised, to allow participants to meet other freelancers and professionals who can support the activity.

The incubator will also maintain strong relationships with alumni (freelancers who have already completed their incubation period), so that there will be a network of freelancers who can also become mentors, re-entering the programme with a new role.

The accelerator programme also includes the involvement of expert consultants who are normally considered too expensive by freelancers. Freelancers who have access to the programme will be able to make use of various services (e.g., contracts, trademark and patent advice, lawyers, notaries, etc.) at capped prices, offered by consultants who join the programme with dedicated fee schedules. This type of support represents an added value for freelancers because it will give them the opportunity to access advice that is fundamental for their entrepreneurial growth, which they usually tend to avoid because it is expensive or there are no financial resources to invest.

The platform will also connect the different freelance members so that it is easier to set up collaborations and find other freelancers with whom, for instance, to bid for contracts or very large projects. One of the most highlighted difficulties by freelancers is loneliness: they often do not have a network of other freelancers with whom they can compare and collaborate. The incubator developed by DIGIfreelancer will instead aim to avoid this loneliness and create opportunities for sharing and support among freelancers to facilitate their growth.

Chapter 5 – Key Partners, Key Activities, Key Resources



Source: Image by vectorjuice on Freepik (<https://bit.ly/49cstZT>)

Introduction

We have seen how a CANVAS Business Model, with its 9 blocks simplified structure, can help us visualise the constituent elements of our business reality, representing it as a large ecosystem of interdependent activities. The upper part of the CANVAS Model's graphic representation is dedicated to non-financial information about our business, such as key partners, key activities and key resources.

Understanding the significance and role of key partners, activities and resources in the context of our business model is essential for establishing and comprehending how our business operates and delivers value (or how we want it to be operating and delivering value).

In the Business Model CANVAS (BMC), introduced and developed by A. Osterwalder and Y. Pigneur in their book "Business Model Generation", key partners are described as the network of external organisations, entities, suppliers, collaborators, and alliances a business forms to enhance its operations and achieve its objectives. Key partners play a crucial role in enhancing a company's or business' overall value proposition and success, as they contribute to various aspects, such as reducing risks, acquiring resources, and expanding market reach. These partnerships can take various forms, including strategic alliances, joint ventures, or outsourcing relationships.

In the Business Model CANVAS, identifying and establishing the right key partners is essential, as these can provide access to essential resources and capabilities that a company may lack internally. For example, a manufacturing company may partner with a logistics firm to streamline its supply chain, or a tech startup may collaborate with established industry players to gain credibility.

For certain kinds of businesses, key partners can also include educational institutions, government agencies, NGOs, industry stakeholders, freelancers and consultants/consultancy firms. Collaborating with schools, universities and vocational training centres as key partners can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources and expertise, contributing to the success of new projects and enterprises.

Key activities within a Business Model CANVAS encompass the core processes and functions a company or business must perform to deliver value, reach its customers, and sustain operations. These activities are the operational heartbeat of the business model and must be also directly aligned with its value proposition. Understanding key activities involves identifying the critical steps required to produce, market, and deliver our product or service.

For instance, if a company's value proposition is based on innovation, its key activities may revolve around research and development. Conversely, a business competing on cost efficiency may focus on optimising production and distribution processes. The key activities of a business or company should always be dynamic and change as the business evolves, adapts to market conditions, or introduces new products and services.

Finally, in the Business Model CANVAS key resources represent the assets and capabilities essential for delivering the value proposition, reaching the target audience, and maintaining customer relationships. These resources can be categorised into physical, intellectual, human, and financial. Identifying and acquiring the right mix of key resources is vital for a business to operate efficiently and differentiate itself in the market.

Physical resources may include manufacturing facilities, distribution networks, or raw materials. Intellectual resources involve the skills and expertise of employees, while financial resources refer to the funding required for operations, marketing, and growth.

There is another element that is closely related to key resources: time resources and their management. In fact, time is a critical dimension that intersects with various aspects of a business model, influencing both key resources and the overall effectiveness of a company's operations. Understanding the relationship between key resources and time management is fundamental for optimising business processes and ensuring long-term sustainability.

First of all, human resources (a fundamental key resource for a business) directly intersects with time management: the skills, expertise, and time commitment of employees contribute significantly to the success of key activities and, consequently, the value proposition. Efficient allocation of human resources involves proper time planning, task prioritisation, and workload distribution; this includes considerations such as project timeline, deadlines, and the need for skill development over time.

For instance, in a technology driven industry, staying competitive may require ongoing training for employees to keep up with evolving trends. Effective time management ensures that employees can dedicate the necessary time to acquire new skills without compromising existing responsibilities.

Financial resources are often associated with budgeting and funding, but they also have a temporal dimension. Proper financial planning, in fact, involves allocating resources over time to support key activities. For instance, a startup may allocate initial funding for product development in the early stages and allocate additional resources for marketing and scaling, as the business matures. Effective time planning in financial resources management includes forecasting cash flow, understanding the timing of expenses, and ensuring that funds are available when needed. This strategic approach to time and financial resources helps mitigate risks and ensures the business's financial health over the long term.

Also intellectual resources, such as patents, trademarks, and proprietary technology, are essential for a business's competitive advantage, and time is a critical factor in managing and leveraging them. Businesses must consider the timing of product releases, for example, or patent expiration dates, and the pace of technological advancements in their industries. Effective time management in intellectual resources use involves aligning innovation with market demand and ensuring timely updates or modifications to maintain relevance. This might include strategic timing for product launches, updates, or the introduction of new features and services to stay ahead of the competition. Physical resources (manufacturing facilities, distribution networks, and raw materials) are directly tied to operational efficiency and time management as well. Businesses must optimise the use of these resources to meet production schedules, fulfil orders, and respond to market demands in a timely manner. Efficient time management in the utilisation of physical resources involves minimising production lead times, streamlining supply chain processes, and ensuring that inventory levels align with demand forecasts. This helps prevent bottlenecks and delays in the production and delivery of goods and services.

Recognising time itself as a key resource is a crucial aspect of the Business Model CANVAS. Time resources encompass factors such as time-to-market, time-to-customer, and overall time efficiency. Businesses need to evaluate how efficiently they convert inputs (including time) into outputs and value for customers.

Effective time management as a key resource involves continuous process improvement, identifying time-saving technologies, and adapting to changes in the market landscape. This adaptive approach

ensures that the business remains agile and responsive to evolving customer needs and competitive pressures.

It goes without saying that key partners, key activities, key resources, and time management and optimisation are all interconnected elements that contribute to the overall success of a business. Through strategic planning and effective management of these components, companies and entrepreneurs can create a robust and sustainable business model that aligns with market demands and achieves long-term success.

Key partners for a freelancer's incubator

The Business Model CANVAS comes to our help in providing a structured framework for the identification and definition of the key components of our Freelancers Digital Incubator.

First of all, we can identify the potential key partners who would play a central role in supporting and enhancing the operations of our digital incubator for freelancers. These can be: technology providers, educational institutions, governmental bodies and regulatory agencies, corporate sponsors or investors, associations from different industries, mentors, trainers and coaches, marketing and PR agencies, partner or collaborating freelancers or entrepreneurs.

Technology providers can offer the necessary infrastructure, software, and digital tools to facilitate the functioning of our digital incubator. This could include cloud services, project management tools, and collaboration platforms.

Collaborating with universities or other educational institutions, such as VET centres, can provide access to a pool of talent, expertise, and potential aspiring freelancers who want to enter the digital incubator. It could also lead to partnerships for training programs or workshops within the incubator. Other key partners can be also public institutions, governmental bodies and regulatory agencies, because they can help the digital incubator navigate legal frameworks, access funding opportunities, and stay compliant with relevant regulations. Financial backing can be secured thanks to corporate sponsors or investors, which are vital for the sustainability over time and for the growth of the digital incubator. These partners could provide funding, mentorship, and valuable industry connections. Furthermore, partnering with industry associations can offer networking opportunities, industry insights, and a platform to showcase the achievements and innovations of the freelancers within the digital incubator.

Another key role is played by mentors, coaches and trainers; establishing partnerships with them can provide valuable guidance to freelancers within the incubator, apart from creating learning and training opportunities. Mentors can offer insights into business strategies, industry trends, and personal development.

Collaborating with marketing and PR agencies, on the other hand, can help the digital incubator in promoting its freelancers' projects and services, attracting potential clients, and building a positive public image. Finally, partnering with other freelancers or entrepreneurs in complementary fields can foster a collaborative environment. Collaborations can lead to shared resources, cross-promotion, and a more diverse set of skills within the incubator.

It is important to note that the specific key partners identified and their roles may vary based on the unique characteristics of the freelancer's digital incubator, and also depending on the countries it operates in.

Apart from key partners to take into account for the creation of a freelancers' digital incubator, it may be worth mentioning also key partners who are relevant in the context of freelancing work: these are individuals or entities that play an important role in supporting and advancing a freelancer's business. They can also vary depending on the nature of a freelancer's work, and of the products and services

offered, but the most common are clients, freelance platforms and agencies, collaborators and subcontractors, legal and financial advisors, networking groups and communities, marketing and branding partners, tools and software providers, financial institutions, and even supportive friends and family. The key partners a freelancer needs will depend on their specific industry, services, and business model. It is important to identify and nurture these partnerships that can help a freelance career grow and succeed. In the same way, it is important that a digital incubator model for freelancers as the one we are designing and presenting here contains and provides a great number of these key partners for freelancers.

Job agencies and freelancer portals are definitely partners to be considered for a freelance incubator because they are one of the ways to establish and maintain fruitful relationships with clients. Freelance platforms or agencies, such as Upwork, Fiverr, or Toptal, can be used to find work, so they can be considered as key partners. In fact, they help connect with potential clients and handle certain aspects of the freelancing process, such as payment processing and dispute resolution. A good digital freelancers' incubator should provide training for first time freelancers who want to start using these platforms in the best way. In the same way, a freelancers' incubator can help find collaborators and subcontractors, especially for those freelancers who are looking to improve and expand their business, or for those who are working on projects that are too large or complex to handle by just one professional.

Moreover, having a reliable attorney or accountant can be valuable for freelancers, especially for the ones who are just starting to take on this new role. These actors provide guidance on legal and financial matters, help with contracts, taxes, and ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

A freelancers' digital incubator can also be a platform for creating networking groups and communities: freelancers can meet each other, or decide to join professional associations, other freelancer's networks, and industry-specific groups that can help them connect with potential clients, mentors, and peers who can offer advice and further opportunities.

Marketing and branding partners that help freelancers with their branding, marketing, or online presence are also essential key partners for attracting and retaining clients; while tools and software providers for project management, invoicing, time tracking, or other aspects of the freelance business can be considered key partners as well, as they enable freelancers to operate more efficiently.

Financial institutions, such as banks or payment processors, are crucial for managing a freelancer's finances, as they facilitate the transfer of funds from clients to their business bank account. Finally, while not business partners in the traditional sense, friends and family can be key partners for a freelancer too, in providing emotional support, encouragement, and understanding as they navigate the challenges of freelancing.

Key activities for a freelancer's incubator

Continuing our analysis based on the BMC, we can better understand and design the key activities involved in establishing and running a freelancer digital incubator. These activities can be categorised into several components, the first of which is undoubtedly the **digital platform development and maintenance**. In fact, building and maintaining a digital platform where freelancers can connect, collaborate and access resources - such as workshops, training, collaborators - is to be considered the main key activity. This of course will include web development,

user interface design, and ongoing maintenance; a well-designed and functional platform is essential for facilitating effective communication, networking, and resource sharing among freelancers.

Another crucial activity for fostering a sense of community among freelancers is, of course, **community management**. This involves community engagement actions, moderation of discussions, organising events, and ensuring a positive and collaborative atmosphere. Once a strong community is built, the value of the digital incubator is automatically enhanced: this can be done by providing freelancers with a supportive network, and a platform for knowledge exchange.

Skill development programs are also central activities of a freelancer's incubator: training and skill development programs tailored to freelancers' needs should be offered, involving partnerships with educational institutions, industry experts, or creating in-house courses. Continuous skill development is vital for freelancers to stay competitive in their respective fields. It adds value to the incubator and attracts freelancers looking to enhance their expertise.

Resource aggregation and curation is also important: this could be done by curating and aggregating resources such as tools, templates, and best practices that freelancers can access to improve their work efficiency. Providing a curated set of resources saves freelancers time and effort in finding relevant tools and information, contributing to their productivity.

Furthermore, organising **networking events**, both online and offline, allows freelancers to connect with potential mentors and collaborators; **establishing partnerships** with other organisations is also essential. Overall, networking is a critical aspect of freelancing, and facilitating these connections through events and partnerships enhances the opportunities available to freelancers in the incubator. Providing freelancers with **guidance on legal and financial aspects of freelancing** - including contract negotiation, tax considerations, and financial planning - is definitely a key activity for a freelancers' digital incubator. In fact, many freelancers struggle with legal and financial aspects, and offering support in these areas contributes to their overall success and sustainability.

These key activities collectively contribute to the success of a freelancer's digital incubator, by creating an environment that supports freelancers in their professional development, fosters collaboration, and addresses unique challenges faced by freelancers in the digital economy.

Key resources and time management for a freelancer's digital incubator

In this section of our Chapter 5, and before trying to define the key resources of our freelancers' digital incubator, it is worth explaining the differences between an **in-person freelancers' incubator** and a **digital freelancers incubator**. In fact, these are substantial.

First of all, an in-person freelancers incubator usually provides a dedicated physical space where the freelancers can work. This includes shared offices, meeting rooms, and collaborative spaces. Digital incubators, instead, leverage online platforms and collaboration tools for communication, project management, and document sharing. This allows freelancers within the incubator to work individually and/ or together, regardless of their geographical location.

In-person freelancers incubators facilitate face-to-face networking opportunities and direct interaction among freelancers, mentors, and potential clients, fostering a sense of community. Regular events, workshops, and seminars enhance networking opportunities. On the other hand, networking in digital incubators for freelancers occurs through online forums, webinars, and virtual events. This facilitates connections with a global community of freelancers, mentors, and clients.

In-person incubators offer hands-on mentoring, which is more personalised; mentors can directly engage with freelancers, providing immediate feedback and guidance. While remote mentoring in a

digital incubator is still valuable, it tends to be more detached. Communication happens through video calls, emails, or online messaging platforms, providing flexibility, but potentially losing some immediacy.

Physical freelancers' incubators may provide access to tangible resources such as specialised equipment, libraries, and other physical assets that freelancers might require for their work; while digital incubators focus on providing access to digital resources, such as online courses, software tools, and virtual libraries. These resources are essential for freelancers working in a digital environment.

In-person incubators often integrate with the local business ecosystem, allowing freelancers to connect with local businesses, government agencies, and potential clients. On the contrary, digital incubators have a broader, often global reach, allowing freelancers to connect with a diverse range of collaborators and clients from around the world. This can lead to a more diverse and expansive set of opportunities.

As we have seen, in the context of a freelancer digital incubator, the Business Model CANVAS provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and analysing various aspects of the business. When focusing on key resources, several critical elements come into play, each contributing significantly to the incubator's overall functionality.

In this section of our Handbook we will analyse these key resources for a freelancer's digital incubator, and their role related to time management.

Human resources: the expertise and skills of individuals within the incubator are paramount; this includes developers, designers, project managers, and other specialists essential for the successful execution of projects. An efficient allocation of tasks based on individual strengths and competencies is crucial. Proper delegation ensures that time is used optimally, and each team member contributes effectively.

Technological resources: digital incubators heavily rely on up-to-date hardware and software tools. This encompasses computers, servers, development environments, and specialised software necessary for project implementation. Ensuring that technological resources are in good working order and well-maintained minimises downtime. This, in turn, facilitates a smooth workflow and prevents disruptions, contributing to effective time management.

Financial resources: adequate funding is essential for sustaining operations, covering overheads, and investing in innovation. Financial resources also play a crucial role in acquiring cutting-edge technologies and talent. Efficient budgeting and financial planning are instrumental: a well-managed financial aspect ensures that the incubator can meet its obligations and pursue opportunities without unnecessary delays.

Network and partnerships: collaborations and partnerships provide access to a broader pool of resources, including knowledge, clients, and potential investors. Building a strong network is essential for business growth and sustainability. Time invested in nurturing and maintaining partnerships can lead to long-term benefits. Effective relationship management saves time in future endeavours, as established connections often facilitate smoother processes.

Intellectual property: protecting intellectual property, including proprietary algorithms or unique methodologies, is crucial for sustaining a competitive edge in the digital landscape. Investing time in securing and managing intellectual property rights prevents legal complications in the future. Proactive measures save time that might otherwise be spent on resolving disputes or addressing infringement issues.

Conclusions

The digital incubator model and the traditional in-person model represent, as previously seen, two distinct approaches to fostering entrepreneurial endeavours, each with its set of advantages and challenges. In the context of freelancers, the digital incubator model, like the one designed by the DIGIfreelancer project, offers a unique set of opportunities that can significantly impact key activities, partnerships, and resource accessibility.

One notable difference lies in the geographical constraints. The traditional in-person model often requires physical proximity, limiting the pool of potential collaborators and mentors. In contrast, the digital incubator transcends these limitations, enabling freelancers to connect with mentors, experts, and collaborators from diverse geographic locations. This **globalised approach** not only broadens perspectives but also fosters a rich, cross-cultural exchange of ideas, potentially enhancing the quality and creativity of the incubated businesses.

Furthermore, a freelancer's digital incubator can streamline key activities by leveraging technological tools. Communication platforms, project management tools, and virtual collaboration spaces facilitate efficient coordination among freelancers. This digital synergy can lead to improved project outcomes, as freelancers can seamlessly share expertise and resources in real time, transcending the constraints of physical boundaries.

In terms of partnerships, a digital incubator can play a pivotal role in creating a network of key collaborators. Through online forums, webinars, training courses, and virtual networking events, freelancers can establish connections with potential clients, investors, and collaborators. The expansive reach of digital platforms facilitates the formation of strategic alliances that might not have been possible within the confines of a localised, in-person model.

Access to key resources is another area where the digital freelancers' incubator excels. Online databases, educational resources, and virtual mentorship programs can be curated and made accessible to freelancers within the digital ecosystem. This **democratisation of resources** ensures that even freelancers operating in remote or underserved areas can tap into a wealth of knowledge, significantly levelling the playing field and fostering inclusivity in entrepreneurship.

Introducing an **economy of scale** into individual businesses, facilitated by the freelancers' digital incubator model, can have profound implications. By aggregating resources, freelancers can benefit from cost efficiencies, shared expertise, and collective bargaining power. This collaborative approach not only enhances the sustainability of individual businesses, but also contributes to the overall resilience of the freelance community within the digital ecosystem.

In conclusion, the digital incubator model for freelancers offers a dynamic and globally connected platform that transcends the limitations of traditional, in-person approaches. The digital landscape not only facilitates more efficient key activities and partnerships, but also democratises access to crucial resources, ultimately contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and collaborative entrepreneurial environment. As we navigate the evolving landscape of entrepreneurship, recognising and harnessing the potential of the digital incubator model becomes paramount in shaping a vibrant and interconnected future for European (and worldwide) freelancers.

Chapter 6 - Customer relationships and channels



Source: Image by vectorjuice on Freepik (<https://bit.ly/3INvipD>)

Introduction

In today's highly competitive business landscape and with the rise of e-commerce it is essential for organisations to have a clear plan on how to build strong relationships with their customers and find effective channels to communicate with them. In the Canvas Business Model, Customer relationships and Channels are separate blocks but heavily interlinked and are related to each other, as well to the Customer Segments explained in Chapter 4.

The Customer Relationships Block in the Canvas Business Model refers to the types of interactions and connections that an organisation or business establishes and maintains with its customers. It focuses on the strategies and activities undertaken to build and nurture relationships throughout the customer lifecycle. This segment helps businesses determine how they will engage with customers, provide support, and create value to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. It includes considerations such as personal assistance, self-service options, online communities, co-creation opportunities, and loyalty programs. The Customer Relationships block plays a crucial role in shaping the overall customer experience and driving customer retention.

The **Channels Block** in the Business Model Canvas refers to the different ways through which an organization can reach and engage target clients. Customer channels describe how different customer segments can be reached

For instance in the Channels Block of the canvas model the following questions help with the decision-making process:

- How do you make potential customers aware of your business, services or product?
- How do you convince customers to buy your product or service?
- How will customers purchase your product?
- How will the product be delivered to customers?
- And after the sale, how can you continue to support customers and develop a relationship with them?

When planning your strategies for Customer relationships and channels always keep in mind your findings regarding the different Customer Segments in your Canvas business Model, because these findings will also affect your decisions regarding the types of relationships and channels of communication with your customers.

Customer relationships that are activated through the DIGIfreelancer project

There are different types of customer relationships that can be activated in a freelance incubator. Here is an overview of the possibilities.

Each incubator according to its business model has to choose which ones to activate, as main and as ancillary.

- **Personal Assistance:** Offer personalized assistance to candidates of the DigiFreelance project and Freelance Incubator by providing one-on-one support and guidance. This can involve regular check-ins, proactive communication, and tailored solutions to meet their

specific needs. By establishing a personal connection, you can build trust and loyalty with customers.

- **Dedicated Personal Assistance:** For clients who require more extensive support, consider offering dedicated personal assistance. This could involve being available for regular calls or meetings, providing priority access, and offering a higher level of personalized service. Take the time to understand your clients' goals, challenges, and expectations.
 - **Personalized Communication:** Foster open dialogue with customers by actively listening to their needs and concerns. Tailor your communication style and approach to match their preferences, whether it's through email, video calls etc.
 - **Regular Updates:** Keep clients informed about their progress in the incubator. Provide regular updates on milestones achieved, challenges faced, and any adjustments made. This transparent communication builds trust and helps manage customer expectations.
- **Self-Service:** Provide resources and tools that enable clients to access information and complete tasks independently. This can include creating a knowledge base or FAQ section, Pool with exercises or resources, extra material such as instructional videos or tutorials, or offering self-guided templates or tools. Self-service options will empower participants to keep track of their own progress and set their next milestone, even self-evaluation while still having the option to reach out for personalized assistance when needed.
- **Automated Services:** Leverage technology to automate certain aspects of the Incubator's progress. This can include setting up automated email responses, using chatbots for basic inquiries, or implementing project management software to streamline communication and task management. Automated services can help you scale business while maintaining efficient and consistent customer interactions.
- **Communities:** Create a community or online forum where your clients can connect with one another, share insights, and seek advice. This can be a valuable resource for candidates to learn from each other, collaborate on projects, and provide peer support. By fostering a sense of community, you can enhance customer relationships and create a network of satisfied participants.
- **Co-creation:** Involve your clients in the creative process by seeking their input and feedback. This can be done through collaborative brainstorming sessions, design reviews, or involving them in decision-making processes. By including customers in the co-creation process, you can strengthen the relationship and ensure that the final product meets their expectations.
- **Networking:** Actively engage in networking activities to connect with potential clients and industry professionals. Attend conferences, workshops, and events related to your field to expand your network and create opportunities for new client relationships.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Seek feedback from clients to understand their level of satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. Act on feedback promptly and demonstrate a commitment to continuously enhancing your services. This leads us to referrals and testimonials. Encourage satisfied clients to refer you to others in their network. Request testimonials or reviews that you can share on your website or social media platforms to build credibility and attract new clients.
- **Online Presence of your business:** Last but not least, build an online presence through platforms like LinkedIn, professional websites, or social media. Regularly update the

organization's profile, share relevant content, and engage in conversations to showcase the benefits the freelance incubator will offer to your clients.

Channels

Channels are defined according to the target audience set and have the following characteristics:

- Channels are a medium through which your business can raise awareness to your chosen customer segments about the products and services you provide.
- Channels provide customers with an opportunity to evaluate and study your company's value proposition.
- It gives customers a platform to buy their chosen products or services.
- Delivers the value proposition to the customer.
- Provides the customer with post-purchase customer support.

In order to properly define the channels of a freelance incubator, it is useful to follow the step-by-step process of questions below:

1. Awareness and Interest phase- How do we raise awareness about our product and services?

Presenting Value Proposition to customers involves effectively communicating the unique benefits and value your product or service provides. In the Business Model Canvas, the Channels block is where you outline the various ways you reach and communicate with your customers. Here are key considerations and channels for delivering a Value Proposition:

- Online Presence: Establish and maintain a strong online presence through a company website, social media platforms, and relevant online forums.
- Content Marketing: Create and distribute valuable content such as blog posts, articles, videos, and infographics that highlight your product's value. Educate your audience about the unique benefits and features of your offering.
- Social Media Marketing: Utilize social media channels to engage with your audience, share success stories, and showcase the value your product brings.
- Email Marketing: Implement targeted email campaigns that focus on communicating your value proposition to segmented customer groups.
- Community Engagement: Engage with your audience through online communities, forums, or user groups. This way you can foster a sense of community, gather feedback, and communicate the value of your product through peer interactions.
- Customer Support and Education: Provide exceptional customer support and educational resources to help customers understand and maximize the value of your product. Ensure customers have the knowledge and assistance needed to derive the full benefits from your offering.

Select channels that align with your target audience and the nature of your product or service. The key is to create a consistent and compelling narrative around your value proposition across all communication channels to resonate with your customers effectively.

The various ways in which the freelance incubator can attract the customer segments it has defined as its target are:

- Social media presence/ advertising: sharing marketing content
- search engine optimization (SEO)

- organise events
- educational webinars
- podcasts
- offer freebies, so that your audience understands the value of your product/service
- Newsletter
- Blog post

The purpose of this phase is to raise awareness about the existence and value proposition of services. Also in this phase you can provide more in-depth information to capture and maintain the customer's interest.

There are also direct and indirect channels in this phase, like various social media: LinkedIn, which is a professional networking tool. But also Instagram or TikTok, which are mostly entertainment and social networking tools, but can spread the news about your product and intrigue people into learning more through carefully designed marketing content.

In the context of the awareness phase, supporting partners of your initiative are also a form of channel, and your service can be advertised through them and attract more audience this way.

2. Evaluation- How do we help customers evaluate our organization's Value Proposition?

During the Evaluation Phase of the customer journey, potential customers are actively considering and comparing different solutions before making a decision. Your goal during this phase is to provide the necessary information and support to help customers make an informed decision in favour of your product or service.

The channels that can be employed at this stage are: Product demonstrations, free trials and live chat support. So that you can help your help your potential customers evaluate your offering, answer questions, and address concerns.

And when your audience in the decision phase, you can cater to this phase with sales presentations, personalized emails, case studies. The purpose in this case is to provide persuasive content to encourage the customer to make a purchase decision.

3. Purchase- How do we allow customers to purchase specific products and services?

In the Purchase Phase of the Business Model Canvas, your focus is on facilitating the transaction and making it easy for customers to buy your product. Here are some considerations and channel options specifically tailored to the Purchase Phase for a product:

- Set up a user-friendly e-commerce platform where customers can browse your courses, review pricing, and make secure online purchases. This way you can streamline the purchasing process, providing a convenient way for customers to buy your courses.
- Integrate secure payment gateways to ensure safe and hassle-free transactions. So you can build trust and confidence in your customers by offering secure payment options.
- Clearly communicate the pricing structure of your courses on your website. This way you provide transparency and avoid confusion, making it easier for customers to understand the value they are receiving.

- If applicable, allow customers to purchase courses through a dedicated mobile app. Cater to users who prefer mobile transactions and provide a seamless mobile experience.
- Offer subscription-based models where customers can access multiple courses for a fixed monthly fee. Provide flexibility and ongoing value for customers who want continuous learning opportunities.
- User Account Management: Enable users to create accounts where they can manage their purchases, track progress, and access course materials. This will enhance the overall customer experience by providing a centralized hub for their activities.
- Confirmation and Receipts & Customer Support During Purchase: Send immediate confirmation emails and receipts upon successful purchase. Offer live chat or customer support during the purchase process to assist with any issues or questions.

The goal is to create a seamless and user-friendly purchasing experience that encourages customers to complete the transaction and begin their learning journey.

4. Delivery- How do we deliver Value Proposition to customers?

In the Business Model Canvas, the Delivery Phase is crucial for ensuring that your product or service is delivered efficiently and effectively to your customers. This phase involves the actual fulfilment of your value proposition and can impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. When delivering the services of a freelance incubator, the focus is on supporting and nurturing freelancers as they develop their skills, build their portfolios, and connect with potential clients. Here are channel considerations for the Delivery Phase in the context of a freelance incubator:

Online Platform: Develop a comprehensive online platform where freelancers can access resources, collaborate, and showcase their work. Facilitate a centralized hub (which can be either digital or in person) for freelancers to engage with the incubator's services, resources, and community.

Mentorship Programs: Establish mentorship programs connecting experienced freelancers with those in the incubator. Provide personalized guidance, advice, and support to freelancers as they navigate their freelance careers.

Virtual and In person Workshops and Training: Conduct virtual workshops, webinars, and training sessions on various freelance-related topics. Deliver educational content to help freelancers enhance their skills and stay updated on industry trends.

Collaborative Tools: Integrate collaborative tools and platforms that enable freelancers to work together on projects. Foster a sense of community, encourage collaboration, and provide opportunities for joint projects.

Networking Events: Host virtual or in-person networking events where freelancers can connect with potential clients, partners, and industry professionals. Facilitate networking opportunities to help freelancers expand their professional connections.

Portfolio Showcases: Create a platform for freelancers to showcase their portfolios and projects and their testimonials on how the incubator has propelled their careers. Enable freelancers to present their work to potential clients and employers.

Freelancer Marketplace Integration: Integrate a marketplace within the incubator platform where freelancers can offer their services. This is an idea that can provide a direct channel for freelancers to find potential clients and opportunities.

Community Forums: Set up community forums or discussion boards for freelancers to share experiences, seek advice, and collaborate. Foster a sense of belonging and create a space for knowledge-sharing within the community.

One-on-One Consultations: Offer one-on-one consultations with mentors or experts to address specific challenges or goals. Provide personalized guidance tailored to individual freelancer needs.

Resource Library: Develop a comprehensive resource library containing templates, guides, and tools for freelancers. Offer freelancers easy access to valuable resources that can aid in their professional development.

Feedback and Review System: Implement a feedback and review system for freelancers to receive constructive feedback from mentors and clients. Encourage continuous improvement and help freelancers build a positive reputation.

Event Sponsorships and Partnerships: Partner with industry events or organizations to sponsor or host events that benefit freelancers. Expand the incubator's reach and provide freelancers with exposure to broader professional networks.

Customize these channels based on the unique needs of your freelance incubator and the freelancers you aim to support. Regularly assess the effectiveness of these channels to ensure that your incubator continues to provide valuable and relevant services to freelancers.

5. After sales- How do we provide post-purchase customer support?

In the Business Model Canvas, providing post-purchase customer support is crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction and ensuring the ongoing success of a freelance incubator. In the context of after sales regarding a freelance incubator some considerations and channels for offering post-purchase customer support could be:

- Dedicated Customer Support Team
- Email Support
- Live Chat
- Knowledge Base
- Community Forums: Maintain community forums where freelancers can seek advice from peers and mentors.
- Regular Webinars/podcasts: Host regular webinars on topics related to the freelance industry, best practices, and updates.
- Networking events: Provide support for events, workshops, or networking sessions hosted by the incubator. Assist freelancers in navigating and maximizing their participation in events.
- Regular Updates and Communications: Send regular updates and communications to freelancers regarding new features, resources, and upcoming events. Keep freelancers engaged and informed about the latest offerings and opportunities.

By offering a range of support channels and resources, you can ensure that freelancers using the incubator feel supported throughout their journey. Regularly assess the effectiveness of your post-purchase customer support efforts and make adjustments based on feedback and evolving needs.

Conclusion

In comparing digital and in-person incubator models, it's evident that each approach brings unique challenges and opportunities. In the digital realm, maintaining communication and relationships with participants is paramount. Leveraging digital channels becomes a strategic imperative for the success of a digital incubator.

Digital incubators employ various online communication channels, such as email, instant messaging, and video conferencing, to foster ongoing connections with freelancers and entrepreneurs. The flexibility and accessibility offered by digital platforms allow for asynchronous communication, overcoming geographical constraints and ensuring accessibility from anywhere in the world. Virtual collaboration tools and platforms play a crucial role in facilitating project management, collaboration, and communication in the digital incubator model. These tools become integral for building and sustaining a sense of community through online forums, discussion groups, and virtual networking events. Training sessions, and webinars in a digital incubator are seamlessly conducted online. Technical support is provided through digital channels, including live chat, email, and tutorials for troubleshooting. Personalized consultations are facilitated through video calls or online meetings, addressing individual needs in a digital environment.

Feedback mechanisms are essential for continuous improvement. Digital incubators leverage online surveys, feedback forms, and analytics to gather insights from participants, ensuring a dynamic and responsive approach. Virtual events, webinars, and online workshops serve as engaging platforms for interaction and learning. Continuous communication is established through automated emails, newsletters, and regular updates, ensuring participants stay informed and engaged. Resources are centralized on a digital platform for easy access, streamlining the participant experience.

To activate the right channels for a digital incubator, understanding the preferences and needs of the target audience is key. Regular assessments of digital communication channels, feedback collection, and adaptive strategies are essential to maintaining meaningful and ongoing interactions with participants. Striking a balance between the advantages of digital flexibility and the need for personal connections is vital for the success of a digital incubator model.

Chapter 7 – Cost structure and revenue streams



Source: Image by pch.vector on Freepik (<https://bit.ly/3xadUck>)

Introduction: Why it is crucial to talk about costs and revenue

Setting up a Freelance Incubator is an engaging endeavour that requires careful planning and strategic decision-making. Among many factors that need to be considered, costs and revenue constitute essential components for ensuring the successful outcome. This chapter explores the reasons why an analysis of costs and revenue is indispensable in the establishment of a Freelance Incubator. Essential information on the most important costs inherent in the Business Model and various sources of income will be provided within the following subchapters.



Source: <https://bit.ly/43zPXXH>

Among numerous reasons for analysing costs and revenue, these should be discussed in particular:

Financial viability and sustainability

Understanding the costs and revenue streams associated with operating a Freelance Incubator is important for ensuring its financial viability. It is essential not only to estimate the current and future spending, but also to assess the income generated through services and partnerships – which enables you to create accurate projections for the budget. All these endeavours ensure the long-term sustainability of a Freelance Incubator.

A detailed presentation of the viability theory for digital businesses can be found here: M. Sprenger, T. Mettler, R. Winter, “A viability theory for digital businesses: Exploring the evolutionary changes of revenue mechanisms to support managerial decisions”, *Information Systems Frontiers*, Vol. 19, Issue 4 (2016): pp. 899-922, DOI: 10.1007/s10796-016-9638-x.

Resource allocation and efficiency

Cost analysis helps to identify the resources that are required for seamless operation of an incubator, including infrastructure, technology and marketing expenses. Efficient allocation of the resources can optimize the incubator’s operations and thus enhance its social impact.

Attracting partnerships

Potential partners are more likely to engage with an incubator that understands its financial landscape. It is essential to demonstrate one’s commitment to financial responsibility by conducting transparent discussions about costs and revenue, presenting accurate financial projections and well-defined revenue models. This builds trust and credibility in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Adaptability to market dynamics

The market is dynamic and subject to rapid changes. Understanding costs and revenue streams equips the incubator with a capacity to adapt to ever-evolving market trends and demands. Revisiting costs and revenue structures allows the incubator to stay responsive to economical shifts. This adaptability is crucial for maintaining relevance and sustaining growth over the long term.

Strategic decision-making

Responsible analyses of costs and revenue are essential tools for informed decision making. When financial implications of various choices are well understood, the incubator can make strategic decisions aligned with its objectives.

It is important to set realistic financial targets and to monitor performance against these benchmarks. This enables the incubator to estimate its success and make adjustments as needed, which ensures that it remains on track to achieve its goals and positively contributes to the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

In conclusion, having a good grasp on costs and revenue is imperative when establishing a Freelance Incubator. Beyond the immediate financial consideration, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the incubator's sustainability, resource allocation, attractiveness to investors, adaptability to market dynamics and strategic decision-making. This way the Freelance Incubator can position itself for long-term success and effectively support the growth of freelancers in a competitive and ever-evolving landscape.



Image by macrovector on Freepik. Source: <https://bit.ly/3x6CBpT>

Cost structure

In the previous chapters, we discussed some of the features of the Business Model Canvas – a strategic management tool that provides a visual framework for describing, analysing, and designing a business model. As mentioned before, it consists of nine key building blocks: Customer Segments, Value Propositions, Channels, Customer Relationships, Revenue Streams, Key Resources, Key Activities, Key Partnerships, and Cost Structure. This concise and comprehensive framework enables entrepreneurs and business leaders to map out and understand the critical elements of their business, fostering a holistic view that facilitates decision-making and innovation.

The allocation of resources, both human and material, is crucial for the incubator's financial sustainability and its ability to effectively support the growth of freelancers. This subchapter explores the key components of the Cost Structure in a Freelance Incubator, in addition addressing questions about the most expensive Key Resources and Activities, the characteristics of cost-driven and value-driven business models, and the various features of costs, including fixed and variable costs, as well as the concepts of economics of scale and scope.

The term **Cost Structure** encompasses the various approaches a business adopts to meet its financial obligations, encompassing diverse expenses such as fixed costs (like building rentals), variable costs (like hourly wages), and unpredictable expenditures for repairs or disaster response. It is essential for a business to thoroughly integrate its preparations for fixed and variable costs, overhead expenses, production supplies, and other financial considerations into its overall cost structure.

Essentially, Cost Structure represents the aggregate of all the ways a business spends its money. Businesses can leverage their Cost Structure as part of a comprehensive Business Model to find areas where expenses can be minimized. Within the Business Model Canvas, Cost Structures hold a pivotal position in the overall cost model. Understanding and managing Cost Structures plays a crucial role in guiding the direction of innovation and the development of value propositions. Thus, businesses can work towards cost reduction and optimize the utilization of every expense incurred.

Cost-driven and value-driven business models

- **Cost-driven business models:** Business models focused on cost prioritize efficiency and expense reduction. In the context of a Freelance Incubator, this might entail minimizing costs in aspects like administrative overhead, technology infrastructure, and personnel. The focus is on providing essential services at a reduced cost to appeal to a wider array of freelancers. This model could be well-suited for incubators aiming to accommodate a large number of freelancers with an emphasis on affordability and accessibility.
- **Value-driven business models:** Models focused on value prioritize providing distinctive value and high-quality services. Within a Freelance Incubator, this could entail investing in premium mentorship programs, specialized training, and cutting-edge technology. The objective is to set the incubator apart by delivering superior support and resources, even if it involves a higher cost. This model may be better suited for incubators targeting a niche market or specific industry.

For each of these business models we developed a case study of a fictitious Freelance Incubator, which might serve as an example:

EXAMPLE A: "DIGI-A"

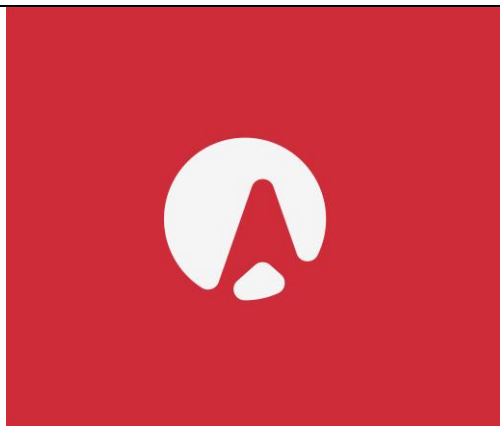


Image by Rochak Shukla on Freepik. Source: <https://bit.ly/43GPtiM>

Introduction: DIGI-A, a freelance business incubator, was established with a clear mission: to provide affordable assistance and resources to emerging freelancers in various industries. Acknowledging the financial limitations faced by freelancers in their early stages, DIGI-A opted for a cost-driven business model to guarantee accessibility and inclusivity.

Strategies:

- **Efficient operations:** DIGI-A focused on minimizing overhead costs by employing technology for communication and collaboration. This approach allowed the incubator to channel more resources into direct support for freelancers.
- **Digital mentorship platforms:** DIGI-A implemented a cost-effective digital mentorship platform. Freelancers gained access to a network of experienced mentors through virtual sessions, reducing the need for physical spaces and additional expenses.
- **Open-source training materials:** DIGI-A shared open-source training materials. By leveraging existing resources and fostering a collaborative learning environment, the incubator provided valuable education without the need to develop proprietary content.
- **Community-driven marketing:** DIGI-A embraced a community-driven marketing strategy, relying on social media and grassroots efforts to reach freelancers. This minimized traditional advertising costs.
- **Membership levels:** DIGI-A offered flexible membership tiers. Basic access to essential resources was made available at an affordable rate, while additional features were offered as optional add-ons, ensuring that freelancers paid for what they needed.

Outcomes:

- **Affordability and accessibility:** The cost-centric approach adopted by DIGI-A resulted in an incubator that was exceptionally cost-effective and open to freelancers from diverse backgrounds. This affordability attracted a variety of talented individuals seeking assistance and collaboration.
- **Community engagement:** The focus on community-driven marketing nurtured a strong sense of belonging among freelancers. The budget-friendly model encouraged active participation and engagement, establishing a supportive environment where freelancers not only received resources but also contributed to the incubator's growth.
- **Sustainable growth:** The cost-conscious strategies allowed DIGI-A to achieve sustainable growth without compromising service quality. By closely aligning costs with essential services, the incubator maintained financial stability and continued to broaden its impact within the freelance community.

Conclusion: DIGI-A's success demonstrates that a cost-driven business model for a freelance business incubator can effectively balance financial sustainability with the mission of supporting emerging talent. Through strategic cost considerations, the incubator not only remained financially viable but also became a beacon of affordability, inclusivity, and community engagement in the landscape of freelance support platforms.

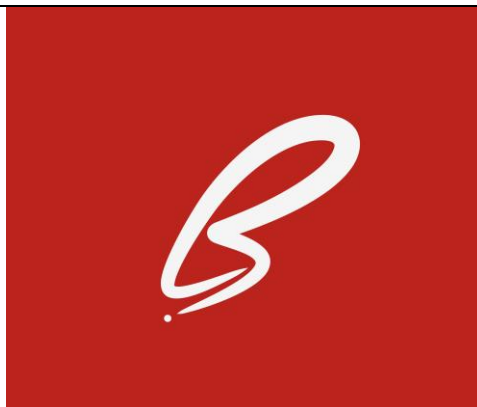
EXAMPLE B: "DIGI-B"

Image by Rochak Shukla on Freepik. Source: <https://bit.ly/3vxY2zP>

Introduction: DIGI-B set out on a mission to transform the landscape by offering a value-driven business model focused on providing premium and tailored support to freelancers. Recognizing the need for high-quality resources and mentorship, DIGI-B adopted a value-driven approach to position itself as a premium incubator catering to exceptional freelancers.

Strategies:

- **Specialized mentorship programs:** DIGI-B dedicated resources to engage industry-leading mentors and experts, devising specialized mentorship programs tailored to the distinct requirements of freelancers in specific niches. This commitment to excellence attracted freelancers seeking exceptional guidance in their respective fields.
- **Cutting-edge training initiatives:** In order to deliver top-tier training, DIGI-B collaborated with prominent experts and institutions to develop state-of-the-art programs. The incubator prioritized staying ahead of industry trends, ensuring that freelancers received training that not only remained relevant but also positioned them as leaders in their respective domains.
- **Exclusive networking events:** DIGI-B organized exclusive networking events, bringing together freelancers, industry leaders, and potential clients. These occasions provided unparalleled opportunities for freelancers to connect with key figures in their respective industries, fostering valuable collaborations and partnerships.
- **Customised resources and support:** The incubator provided tailored resources, including access to proprietary tools and platforms, to meet the unique needs of freelancers. DIGI-B focused on understanding the individual requirements of freelancers and delivering personalized support to elevate their businesses.

Outcomes:

- **Premium reputation:** DIGI-B established itself as a premium brand among other freelance incubators. The emphasis on quality attracted highly skilled freelancers, creating a community known for excellence and innovation.
- **Industry influence:** Through specialized mentorship and cutting-edge training, DIGI-B cultivated a community of freelancers who emerged as influencers and thought leaders in their respective industries. This industry influence further elevated the incubator's standing.
- **Strategic partnerships:** The exclusive networking events facilitated strategic partnerships between freelancers and industry stakeholders. These collaborations not only benefited individual freelancers but also contributed to the overall growth of DIGI-B.

Conclusion: DIGI-B's success exemplifies the power of a value-driven business model. By prioritizing premium offerings, personalized support, and industry influence, the incubator not only attracted top-tier freelancers but also played a pivotal role in shaping the future of freelancing within a dynamic and competitive landscape. The value-driven approach showcased the importance of quality in fostering a community of excellence and innovation.

Did you know...?

*“Most businesses are located **between cost and value driven model, with inclination to cost-driven model**. The most costly resources (2/3 of costs) are machines, technologies and workers. The most costly activities (2/3 of costs) are production, input logistics, warehousing and marketing”².*



Image by vectorjuice on Freepik. Source: <https://bit.ly/4csH0nI>

Cost features

- **Fixed costs**, also known as overhead costs or fixed expenses, are expenses that do not change with the level of production or sales within a certain range. These costs remain constant regardless of the volume of goods or services produced by a business. Fixed costs are associated with the basic operating expenses and they must be paid regularly, regardless of business activity. Fixed costs include **salaries**, which constitute their significant portion; **rents** (costs associated with leasing or owning physical space for co-working areas, meeting rooms, and event spaces) and **utilities** (expenses related to electricity, water, heating, and other essential utilities).
- **Variable costs** are expenses that vary in proportion to the level of production or sales within a business. Unlike fixed costs, they change as the business activity level changes. As production or sales increase, variable costs increase; as production or sales decrease, variable costs decrease. Variable costs include **training programs** (designing, implementing, and facilitating training sessions) and **events** (organizing community events, including venue rental, catering, and promotional materials).

² Štefan Slávik, Richard Bednár, “Analysis of Business Models”, *Journal of Competitiveness*, Vol. 6, Issue 4 (2014): p. 39, DOI: 10.7441/joc.2014.04.02.

Economics of scale and scope

Economics of scale involve the cost advantages gained by increasing the production volume of a single product or service. As production expands, average costs per unit decrease due to the spreading of fixed costs over a larger quantity. Conversely, economics of scope focus on the cost advantages derived from diversifying a business's product or service offerings. Producing a variety of products or services allows a business to achieve efficiencies in areas such as marketing, distribution, and research and development.

- **Economics of scale:** As the incubator grows and serves a larger community of freelancers, certain costs per unit, such as technology infrastructure and administrative overhead, may decrease.
- **Economics of scope:** Diversifying services or expanding the range of industries served can lead to cost efficiencies as shared resources can be leveraged across multiple areas.

Understanding the cost structure in a freelance incubator is crucial for effective business management. By identifying the most expensive key resources and activities, choosing between cost-driven and value-driven business models, and understanding the characteristics of fixed and variable costs, incubators can make informed decisions to ensure financial sustainability while providing valuable support to freelancers. Striking a balance between cost-effectiveness and value creation is crucial for the success of a Freelance Incubator in a competitive and dynamic entrepreneurial landscape.

Revenue Streams

This component includes the earnings a business acquires by subtracting costs from the revenue generated from each customer segment. Organizations must assess the value they provide to each customer segment accurately. An accurate assessment of this value results in multiple revenue streams from a single customer segment.

It is imperative to clearly define revenue streams. Merely listing the sources for various revenue streams is not enough; specifying their pricing and projected lifecycles is equally important. Listing these details helps evaluate the profitability of opting for a particular revenue stream. If the cost exceeds what the customer is willing to pay, or surpasses the revenues the product will generate before its lifecycle ends, it may not make sense to proceed with the product.

Revenue streams vary based on differences in pricing mechanisms, e.g. fixed list prices, bargaining, auctioning, market-dependent, volume-dependent, or yield management.

Establishing the anticipated type and source of revenue is fundamental for the successful growth of a Freelance Incubator as it brings about clarity and sustainability. Knowing the anticipated revenue sources allows the incubator to plan its operations, strategically allocate resources, and develop targeted programs and services. Revenue for a Freelance Incubator may stem from diverse channels like membership fees, training programs, partnerships, or sponsored events. Grasping the specific activities or services generating revenue empowers the incubator to concentrate on high-impact areas, tailor its offerings to freelancer needs, and adapt to market changes. This clarity is crucial for financial stability, effective resource allocation, and the long-term success of the incubator, ensuring its ongoing ability to provide valuable support for freelancers in their professional development.

Understanding and diversifying revenue streams is paramount for the sustainable advancement of a freelance incubator. The capability to discern what value customers are willing to pay for, how they currently make payments, and their preferences in payment methods is vital for formulating a successful revenue strategy. This subchapter explores the various income sources for a Freelance Incubator.

Value Proposition analysis

A comprehensive examination of the incubator's Value Proposition is imperative to determine what customers are willing to invest in. This involves a thorough understanding of the distinct services and resources offered by the incubator, such as mentorship programs, training sessions, co-working spaces, and networking opportunities. Customers are inclined to pay for services that directly contribute to their success as freelancers.

Current revenue sources

Identifying what customers are presently paying for helps in evaluating the efficacy of existing revenue streams. This could encompass membership fees, charges for specialized training programs, or event sponsorships. Analysing current revenue sources provides insights into the most highly valued services and guides future strategies for monetization.

Payment methods

Understanding the current payment methods employed by customers is crucial for optimizing payment processes. Whether through online platforms, bank transfers, or other means, the incubator must adapt to the preferences of its user base. The ease and convenience of payment methods can significantly impact customer satisfaction and retention.



Image by Freepik. Source: <https://bit.ly/3xi1S0d>

Preferred payment methods

Determining how customers prefer to pay ensures a user-friendly experience. Preferences may vary among freelancers, so offering flexibility in payment options, such as credit card payments, direct debits, or digital wallets, enhances customer satisfaction.

Contribution to overall revenues

Understanding the contribution of each revenue stream to the overall financial health of the incubator is vital. Some streams may be more lucrative but require significant resources, while others may be consistent but less substantial. A balanced mix of revenue streams helps to mitigate risks and ensures financial stability.

Types of revenues

- **Asset sale:** Revenue generated from selling physical or digital assets. Example: Selling access to specialized software tools.
- **Usage fee:** Revenue generated based on consumption of a product/service. Example: Charging freelancers for each use of a mentorship session or training program.
- **Subscription fees:** Revenue generated from regular payments for access to a product/service over a specified period. Example: Monthly or annual fees for access to the incubator's resources and services.
- Funding for social purposes through calls for tenders or support from companies. The incubator can be supported by financing for social purposes through public initiatives or companies that are interested either because of social responsibilities or because they want to finance an incubator of qualified suppliers.



Image by macrovector on Freepik. Source: <https://bit.ly/3lQNwXd>

In summary, the Revenue Streams of a Freelance Incubator are closely tied to its Value Propositions and the requirements of its user community. It is vital for the successful growth of the incubator to set clear expectations regarding the anticipated revenue from each activity or service. By harmonizing pricing strategies with customer preferences and industry norms, the incubator can not only generate consistent income but also bolster its reputation and significance within the freelance ecosystem. A diversified and flexible revenue model guarantees resilience and sustained success in a dynamic and competitive environment.

KEY REVENUE AND MARKET QUESTIONS

What benefits will encourage customers to invest more money?

What benefits are they currently paying for?

How are they paying right now?

Which payment method would be their preference?

What proportion of the overall revenue does each revenue stream constitute?

Conclusion

As we could see above, operating a Freelance Incubator from a financial perspective is a multifaceted endeavour that requires careful balancing between cost management and revenue generation. In the preceding subchapters, we delved into critical aspects of cost structure and revenue streams within the incubator model. As we conclude this exploration, it is essential to provide a few practical tips and monitoring suggestions to guide the successful development of a Freelance Incubator.

Tips for financial success

- **Strategic resource allocation:** Prioritize resources based on their impact on freelancers' success. By directing resources to impactful initiatives like targeted training and mentorship, the incubator maximizes its influence on freelancers' success, adapts to industry trends, and attracts potential partnerships. This approach ensures efficient resource use, mitigates risks, and contributes to the long-term success of both freelancers and the incubator.
- **Value-driven offerings:** Emphasize services that add significant value to freelancers. By delivering tangible value like specialized training and networking opportunities, the incubator ensures tailored resources for professional growth. This approach enhances the incubator's appeal, fosters positive relationships, and positions it as a valuable hub, contributing to sustained success for freelancers and the incubator alike.
- **Diversification of revenue streams:** Avoid over-reliance on a single revenue source; diversify to mitigate risks. This strategy not only mitigates risks but also ensures continuous support and growth opportunities for freelancers. Diversifying revenue streams helps the incubator adapt to market changes, expand its impact and remain a robust resource for freelancers in the dynamic freelance landscape.
- **Adaptability to market dynamics:** Stay agile and responsive to changes. Rapid adjustments are crucial to provide freelancers with up-to-date guidance. This flexibility enhances the incubator's reputation and positions it as a valuable resource, ensuring continued success for freelancers in a dynamic market.
- **Customer-centric approach:** Understand customer preferences and align services with their needs. This focus enhances satisfaction, engagement, and the incubator's reputation as a trusted partner. A customer-centric approach ensures adaptability, positioning the incubator as an indispensable hub for the success of freelancers in its community.

Monitoring suggestions

- **Financial health metrics:** Keep track of cash flow, profit margins, and return on investment. Examine financial statements to ensure financial health.
- **Customer satisfaction metrics:** Gather feedback through surveys, reviews, and testimonials. Implement changes based on feedback to enhance the overall customer experience.
- **Revenue contribution analysis:** Assess the contribution of each revenue stream to total revenues. Adjust marketing and operational strategies based on the performance of individual streams.
- **Cost efficiency metrics:** Monitor costs per key resource and key activity. Identify areas for cost reduction or optimization without compromising quality.
- **Market research and competitor analysis:** Stay informed about industry trends, competitor strategies, and market demands. Adapt business models and services based on the evolving market landscape.

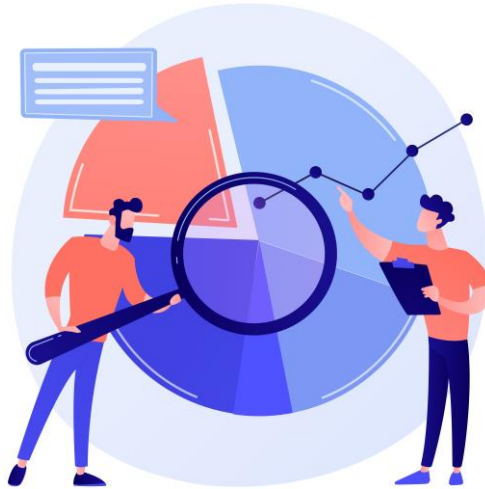


Image by vectorjuice on Freepik. Source: <https://bit.ly/3vuBpfx>

To sum up, the viability of an incubator relies on its capacity to navigate financial complexities while delivering concrete value to its community. Through effective cost management, diversification of revenue streams, and awareness of freelancers' evolving needs, a Freelance Incubator can establish itself as a hub of innovation and support.

The journey of a Freelance Incubator is not without its challenges, but with strategic planning, adaptability, and a focus on operational excellence, it can become a catalyst for the flourishing of freelancers and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.

References

Chapter 1

- Khosla, R. (2023) 'This is how entrepreneurship will change in 2023', *World Economic Forum*, 11 January. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/davos23-entrepreneurship-change-this-year/#:~:text=Young%20entrepreneurs%20are%20bypassing%20the%20traditional%20labour%20market%2C,economic%20disruption%20look%20set%20to%20continue%20in%202023> (Accessed: 17 August 2023).
- M.Conney, T. (2022) 'Entrepreneurship Skills for Growth-Orientated Businesses', 28 November. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/Cooney_entrepreneurship_skills_HGF.pdf (Accessed: 17 August 2023).

Chapter 2

- Main European Hubs. Source graphic and data: *The Accelerator and Incubator Ecosystem in Europe by Telefonica*. (https://www.telefonica.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2022/02/The_Accelerator_and_Incubator_Ecosystem_in_Europe.pdf)
- The rise of academic incubators. (2015, March 16). Gensler. <https://www.gensler.com/blog/the-rise-of-academic-incubators>
- Startups, H. F. (2023, January 9). What is an incubator? A complete guide - HubSpot for startups. HubSpot. <https://www.hubspot.com/startups/resources/what-is-an-incubator>
- Understanding Incubators vs Accelerators, www.medium.com
- Barcelona Activa-Media-TIC Incubator Website: <https://www.barcelona.cat/barcelonactiva/en/start-ups-and-growing-companies/media-tic>
- "Media-TIC: un catalizador para la innovación creativa en Barcelona" (PDF): <https://media.dandelion-europe.eu/uploads/2020/05/13050354/Media-TIC-Case-Study.pdf>
- Erik. (2023, August 19). Key factors in selecting a business incubator for startups. StartupNV. <https://startupnv.org/key-considerations-when-choosing-the-right-business-incubator-for-startups/#:~:text=Selecting%20the%20right%20business%20incubator,options%20offered%20by%20the%20incubator.>
- Erik. (2023, August 19). Key factors in selecting a business incubator for startups. StartupNV. <https://startupnv.org/key-considerations-when-choosing-the-right-business-incubator-for-startups/#:~:text=Selecting%20the%20right%20business%20incubator,options%20offered%20by%20the%20incubator.>
- Freelancer Nation | incubator for creative freelancers & solopreneurs. (n.d.). <https://www.freelancernation.asia/>

Chapter 3

- Centrum Zmiany NOWE. (2023). *Coaching przedsiębiorczości - Kursy online*, <https://eduszkolenia24.pl/eduszkolenia/coaching-przedsiębiorczosci/>
- Coursera. (2021). *Building Your Freelancing Career Specialization [5 courses] (CalArts) | Coursera*, [Building Your Freelancing Career Specialization \[5 courses\] \(CalArts\) | Coursera](https://www.coursera.org/specializations/building-your-freelancing-career-specialization)
- Crehana. (2021). *Plataforma #1 de Desarrollo de Equipos – Crehana*, <https://www.crehana.com/>
- Flowerista. (2023). *Flowerista, business strategy, coaching e digital marketing*, <https://www.flowerista.it/>
- Freelance Business Masterclasses (2022). *Guide 'Doing Freelance Business in Belgium'*, <https://freelancebusiness.be/supportguide>
- Gaito, R. (2023). *Growth Program - L'academy di Raffaele Gaito*, <https://www.raffaelegaito.com/growth-program/#:~:text=Con%20il%20Growth%20Program%20ci%20occupiamo%20noi%20di,skill.%20Senza%20pagare%20abbonamenti%21%20SCOPRI%20IL%20GROWTH%20PROGRAM>
- Google Digital Garage. (2022). *Grow with Google - Courses & Tools to Grow Your Business or Career*, <https://grow.google/intl/europe/>

- IE Business School. (Year). *IE - Business & Management | Pathway*, https://landings.ie.edu/masterland-programs-in-business-management-cro?gclid=c76e4135a2411e554cbb25c02551e91d&gclid=c76e4135a2411e554cbb25c02551e91d&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=AO-MAS-BUS-BMNG-ALLP-REGLR-PW-TIER1-ESP-BIN-BRA-LEAD&utm_term=IE%20Business%20School%20Madrid&utm_content=IE%20Business%20School%20-%20ING
- IESE Business School. (2022). *IESE Business School: World Leader in MBAs & Executive Education*, <https://www.iese.edu/>
- Ifoa. (2022). *Ifoa Sapere Utile*, <https://www.ifo.it/>
- ProfilCultura. (2022). *ProfilCultura: primo sito lavoro formazione nei settori della cultura media e insegnamento*, <https://www.profilcultura.it/>
- Polska Fundacja Przedsiębiorczości. (Year). *Training Offer PFP*, <https://szkolenia.pfp.com.pl/>
- ReferNet Belgium; Cedefop (2022). *Belgium: 'We are founders' programme: strengthening entrepreneurial skills*. National news on VET
- Udacity. (2022). *Become a Digital Freelancer | Udacity*, https://www.udacity.com/course/digital-freelancer-nanodegree--nd083?_gl=1*1hloskv*_up*MQ..&gclid=CjwKCAjwo9unBhBTEiwAipC117B135d-xtUDN2VHDL-K5L9VgFM0U8mZABtmq4QQ_np53mRFe-p4dxoCifwQAvD_BwE

Chapter 4

- Osterwalder Alexander et al. "The business model ontology: A proposition in a design science approach.", Université De Lausanne Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales (2004) available at <https://shorturl.at/qyz05> (reached in 2023, October)
- Osterwalder Alexander, and Yves Pigneur. "Business Model Generation: A Handbook For Visionaries, Game Changers, And Challengers" Wiley, 2010.
- Osterwalder Alexander, et al. "Value Proposition Design: How to Create Products and Services Customers Want". Wiley, 2014.
- Bland David and Osterwalder Alexander. "Testing Business Ideas: A Field Guide for Rapid Experimentation", Wiley, 2019.
- Adele Revella, "Buyer Personas: How to Gain Insight into your Customer's Expectations, Align your Marketing Strategies, and Win More Business", Wiley, 2015.
- Stormie Andrews, "The World's Best Buyer Persona System: The Buyer Persona Reimagined: It's Not Who They Are but HOW THEY THINK!", Yokel Local Publications, 2020.
- Tamara Adlin & John Pruitt "The Essential Persona Lifecycle: Your Guide to Building and Using Personas", Morgan Kaufmann Abridged, 2010

Chapter 5

- Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2010). *Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers*. Wiley.
- Chesbrough, H. W. (2006). *Open Business Models: How to Thrive in the New Innovation Landscape*. Harvard Business Press.
- Blank, S., & Dorf, B. (2012). *The Startup Owner's Manual: The Step-by-Step Guide for Building a Great Company*. K & S Ranch.
- Yoffie, D. B., & Cusumano, M. A. (1997). *Competing on Internet Time: Lessons from Netscape and Its Battle with Microsoft*. Free Press.
- Chesbrough, H. (2003). *Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology*. Harvard Business Press.
- Duhigg, C. (2016). *Smarter Faster Better: The Secrets of Being Productive in Life and Business*. Random House.

Chapter 6

- Brunner M., Wolfartsberger J. (2020) Virtual Reality enriched Business Model Canvas Building Blocks for enhancing Customer Retention, *Procedia Manufacturing*, Volume 42, Pages 154-157, ISSN 2351-9789, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.promfg.2020.02.062>
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351978920306260?ref=pdf_download&fr=RR-2&rr=83d212eb0a9dee9c
- Dieffenbacher, S.F. (2024, January 11). What is Customer Relationships in the Business Model Canvas? *Digital Leadership*. <https://digitalleadership.com/blog/customer-relationships-bmc/>
- Rice, T. (2022, November 25). 9 building blocks of the business model canvas. *Animas Marketing*. https://animasmarketing.com/9-building-blocks-business-model-canvas/?utm_content=cmp-true
- Osterwalder A. & Pigneur Y. *The Business Model Canvas Explained*
https://www.bauer.uh.edu/undergraduate/documents/Business_Model_Canvas_Explained.pdf
- How do I use the Customer Relationships building block of the Business Model Canvas? – Have a question? Find the answer here. (n.d.).
<https://strategyzer.uservoice.com/knowledgebase/articles/1194373-how-do-i-use-the-customer-relationships-building-b>
- Sorri, K.; Seppänen, M.; Still, K., Valkokari, K. (2019) *Business Model Innovation with Platform Canvas*
 Published in: *Journal of Business Models*
https://cris.vtt.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/26015079/JOBM_2019_Sorri_et_al_business_model_innovation_with_platform_canvas.pdf
- Sallmén, L. (2020). *Developing a Business Concept with Business Model Canvas: Case Sali Events*. Theseus. <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/353783>
- Ovie Isnanda Irsa & Agus Achmad Suhendra (2020) *Business Process Improvements on National E-KTP Retail Equipment Sales Using Business Model Canvas* DOI: 10.31364/SCIRJ/v8.i12.2020.P1220827
<http://dx.doi.org/10.31364/SCIRJ/v8.i12.2020.P1220827>
<https://www.scirj.org/papers-1220/scirj-P1220827.pdf>
- Sabri, Mohammad Omar & Al-qawasmi, Khaled. (2021). *Adoption of Business Model Canvas in Exploring Digital Business Transformation: The Case of Scientific Research Information System*. SSRN Electronic Journal. 10.2139/ssrn.3973840. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mohammad-Omar-Sabri/publication/356678622_Adoption_of_Business_Model_Canvas_in_Exploring_Digital_Business_Transformation_The_Case_of_Scientific_Research_Information_System/links/6383073f554def619376f511/Adoption-of-Business-Model-Canvas-in-Exploring-Digital-Business-Transformation-The-Case-of-Scientific-Research-Information-System.pdf
- Verrue J. (2014) *A critical investigation of the Osterwalder business model canvas: an in-depth case study (UGent) Belgian Entrepreneurship Research Day, Proceedings*.
<https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/5712151>
- Boris F.; Yves P. (2015) *Extending the business model canvas : a dynamic perspective* <https://arodes.hes-so.ch/record/890/usage>
- JOVANOVSKI B.R., GECEVSKA V., POLENAKOVIK R., SUTEVSKI D., STANKOVSKA I. (2015) *BUSINESS MODEL AS A SUCCESS FACTOR FOR THE COMPANIES GROWTH*
<https://annals.fih.upt.ro/pdf-full/2015/ANNALS-2015-3-01.pdf>
- Čirjevskis A. (2018) *Exploration of Acquisition Based Dynamic Capabilities Underpinning a Reinvention of Business Models in Technology-Related M&A Process | RISEBA University of Business, Arts, and Technology*, <https://www.iiisci.org/journal/pdv/sci/pdfs/EB986VQ18.pdf>
- 6 ways successful freelancers build strong client relationships <https://webflow.com/blog/6-ways-successful-freelancers-build-strong-client-relationships>
- Traynor M. (2023) *Choosing the Right Channels for Your Business Model Canvas*
<https://www.score.org/sanluisobispo/resource/blog-post/choosing-right-channels-your-business-model-canvas>
- Bailey K. (2020) *The Business Model Canvas for freelancers and the self-employed*
<https://kontist.com/en/posts/business-model-canvas-for-freelancers/>

- Moyo J. (2022) The Business Model Canvas Explained: Customer Relationships
<https://profitablebusinessmodels.com/business-model-canvas-customer-relationships/>
- Marketing channels yielding highest return on investment (ROI) according to e-commerce retailers in Europe in 2020 and 2030 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1234593/marketing-channels-ecommerce-europe/>
- Becker, M.; Bröcker, J-O. (2021) Business Model Canvas - Overview of the main advantages and disadvantages | IUCF Working Paper, No. 6/2021
<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/234963/1/Business-Model-Canvas-Overview-of-main-advantages-and-disavantages.pdf>

Chapter 7

- Osterwalder Alexander, "The business model ontology: A proposition in a design science approach", Lausanne 2004.
- Osterwalder Alexander, Pigneur Yves, "Business Model Generation: A Handbook For Visionaries, Game Changers, And Challengers", Hoboken 2010.
- Posza Alexandra, "Business incubation analysis with the help of real option theory", International Journal of Multidisciplinarity in Business and Science, Vol. 5 (2019): pp. 64-72,
- Qastharin Anissa, "Business Model Canvas for Social Enterprise", Bandung 2015. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Annisa-Qastharin/publication/323393037_Business_Model_Canvas_for_Social_Enterprise/links/5aa8e20d0f7e9b0ea308294a/Business-Model-Canvas-for-Social-Enterprise.pdf (accessed 14 December 2023).
- Slávik Štefan, Bednár Richard, "Analysis of Business Models", Journal of Competitiveness, Vol. 6, Issue 4 (2014): pp. 19-40, DOI: 10.7441/joc.2014.04.02.
- Sprenger Michaela et al., "A viability theory for digital businesses: Exploring the evolutionary changes of revenue mechanisms to support managerial decisions", Information Systems Frontiers, Vol. 19, Issue 4 (2016): pp. 899-922, DOI: 10.1007/s10796-016-9638-x.

