

six-figure
freelancer

8 tips on how to make 100k+ as a solo graphic designer*



*allow 4-5 years for efforts to completely pay off

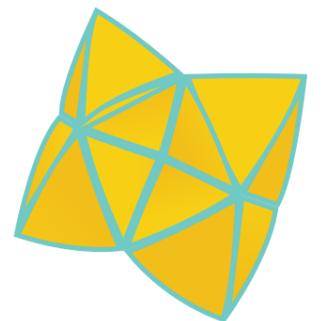
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“The preface”

This is it. This 7000-word eBook contains all the secrets I’ve ever used to take Origami Graphics from a university side-gig into a projected 6-figure freelance business in 4 years.

I want to start by thanking you. It’s people like you who are exactly the right people to be taking journeys like this. You’re the kind of person who’s happy to invest your hard-earned money because you know that it’ll help you in the long run. And you know that effort, and hard work, deserves financial reward without guilt.

I know because you paid for this eBook.

Sending the best and most promising vibes on your journey to complete financial freedom.

Taylor Eggleton (Tay)
Owner + Head Graphic Designer
The Designer Playbook and Origami Graphics

*This is my dog, Brandy.
She is quite cool I think*

A quick thing about me

Hey, I'm Taylor. I own and run Origami Graphics, which is the name I gave to my freelancing ~entity~. I just felt like "Taylor Eggleton Designs" was probably a bit boring and unmemorable.

I have a degree in Arts (Digital Design and Production/Japanese Language) and a degree in Psychology. I started freelancing in my last year of university and kept scaling it when I left. I've never worked in an agency. I just didn't want to.

I love tea and coffee. I love pasta. I could live solely on gnocchi. I spend heaps of my time gardening. I feel best at the beach.

I like to be unique and a little wild. My pet peeve is coming across designers who continuously use that same E D G Y A E S T H E T I C

and whose every logo looks like **this** despite a 10k-or-so price tag. Where's the swirly flair, man? The individuality? When'd that go out of fashion? Why does all your shit look the same?

Also I do not really enjoy bacon unless it's balanced thoughtfully alongside other foods, but we might be getting off topic now.

A few things I'd like you to know:

I've intentionally made this a fillable e-Book instead of a print book to save on paper.

Please consider the environment before printing the entire book. If you do feel the need to print (it is quite good for the memory to write some things by hand!), then consider only printing the worksheets.

This book may later be fleshed out and made into a course. If this happens, I'll contact you about getting a significant signup discount.

Finally, I live and work in Canberra, on Ngunawal country.

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before
we
begin

Are You Sure?

I'm going to level with you.

This isn't a magic spell to make money fall into your hands. This book gives you tips, but you're going to need to undertake a shitload of work to implement it and bring the returns in.

You've chosen one of those corporate jobs that gets kicked to the bottom of the shit pile. The jobs that aren't paid that much money, because really,

Graphic Design is just not an essential job.

It's true. If there were a nuclear apocalypse, we'd be one of the first jobs that isn't needed.

But that doesn't mean we don't add value and colour to people's lives. Life isn't just about what you need. It's about what you want, and what you love. And design is one of those things that adds flavour to an otherwise tedious life.

Most retail businesses are also unnecessary. Nobody needs clothes. Art supplies? Trivial. Candles? Don't even get me started. Professional sports? Completely unnecessary. Get rid of it. And yet look at the revenue it brings in.

It's common to make 6 figures in prestigious, important jobs like medicine and law, but it's also entirely possible in the less essential professions and I'm going to show you how to do it. Guilt-free. Because you can. :)

Just be ready for a bit of a fight and a fairly big journey of self-discovery along the way.

But before we dive into making 6 figures, we're going to calculate how much people are actually earning for this work day-to-day.

VERY IMPORTANT - make sure you **download**
and **save** this booklet as you go,
otherwise you might lose your changes!

A quick look on Indeed in January 2021 gives the following salary results for a Graphic Designer (context in brackets when given):

- \$55,000 (Sportswear brand)
- \$44,000 (Junior designer, roofing supplies)
- \$68,000 - \$84,000 (6-12 Mths, Government)
- \$73,000 - \$79,000 (Government)
- \$60,000 - \$70,000
- \$50,000 - \$65,000 (Property group)
- \$55,000 - \$70,000 (Cleaning company)
- \$79,000 - \$83,800 (NSW Government)
- \$80,000 - \$85,000- (Recruitment company)
- \$40,000 - \$60,000 (Marketing company)
- \$52,000 (Printing company)
- \$80,000 - \$100,000 (Team Leader, Media and Education)
- \$65,000 - \$75,000
- \$50,000 - \$70,000 (Animator/Designer)
- \$90,000 (Senior UX Designer)
- \$55,000 - \$68,000
- \$54,000 - \$70,000 (Packaging)

To be really sure on the numbers, I'm going to take both an average and a median.

Average:

2029/30
= **67.63**

Median:

40 44 50 50 52 54 55 55 55 60 60 65 65 68 68 70 70 70 70 73 75 79 79 80
80 83 84 85 90 100
= **69**

So \$67,500 - \$69,000 is about the average take-home salary for a graphic designer, plus super.

You're reading an eBook on how to make 100k+ as a graphic designer, and that means you're looking to pull in at least 50% to 100% more than the average person doing your job. It's a big task.

The thing is, when you're running your own business, the sky is the limit on how much money you can earn.

But it comes with a price.

Things you will have to sacrifice (at least for a while) to make 100k+ as a graphic designer:

- Job security
- Job consistency
- Predictable pay days
- Immediate gratification
- Leave benefits, including sick leave
- Savings
- The ability to leave work at work

And potentially, a little bit of

- Sleep
- Sanity

But things you will gain in exchange:

- Independence
- Flexibility
- Not having to answer to a boss
- Higher income potential
- The ability to work remotely, 100% of the time
- Self-satisfaction
- A range of organisational, time management, customer service, and admin skills
- Great friends and colleagues
- Respect and admiration

It's worth it.

Pre-Read Check

Do you really want to do this? Honestly?

Earning 6 figures is completely possible, but it's going to take time (generally 4-5 years) and sustained effort. You're going to need to make your business one of the main focuses of your life during this time, and put some other things on hold (for me, that was learning Japanese - something I've picked up again now!).

You need to be willing to put this effort in, and accept the initial insecurity, if you want to make this work. You're going to have to have a real passion for the work and not just want to get rich in any way possible, otherwise you're at risk of quitting during the hard and very unfun times that will come. (And they will come. Sorry.)

Some people are honestly just better off having a more average, but stable, job. No shame in that. Others start with big dreams but aren't willing to accept the risk of failure and do what's required long-term to follow through. Some people, too, realise they're more into design as a hobby or a side gig and don't like the stress and the drain of making it their bread and butter. Some people don't have the confidence and never start. It's a good idea to sit down and analyse whether you think you might be one of those people or not.

There are more reasons 6-figure-freelancing might not be right for you. If you're raising a young family or are otherwise stretched tight financially, and don't have a bank of savings (at least \$15,000) or a partner with a stable job to lean on, it might not be the right time to be aiming for 6 figures. I'd advise that you keep your design as a side-gig until things are more stable for you.

If you are ready to do it, you'll need to think about why you want to do it, and keep that why in your mind as the years tick by.

Is it to prove something? To give yourself complete and utter freedom? To enable your significant other to work less or spend more time with the kids?

Here are my why's.

1. Complete vocational freedom

I hated the idea of being at the bottom of the pecking order in an agency. I'd much rather work for myself, even if I don't make 6 figures. To me, that freedom, flexibility, and control is priceless.

2. Showing that graphic designers can be insanely intelligent, successful people

I was a very high achiever in school, but most of the other smart kids do science or law. Rocking up to the 10 year reunion as a 6-figure business owner in drawing pictures is an A+ feeling.

3. Being able to buy property

The housing market is wack. The more I earn, the nicer a house I can buy (if any) to live out the Australian dream, house our dogs in a bigger yard and, later on, have kids (if I want) having already secured a big-enough place for a family to thrive.

It's worth saying that there are two types of goals: *Performance Goals* and *Mastery Goals*.

A *Performance Goal* is when you want to prove or show something to other people. Goal #2 is an example of that.

A *Mastery Goal* is when you want to do something for yourself to improve your own self or quality of life. Goals 1 and 3 are better examples of that. These goals are more likely to sustain you for longer. You get your own validation and satisfaction, and that matters more when the going gets tough.

So try to have some of both types of goals.

If you think you can do it, and you're willing to put in the hard yards, I'm here to help you succeed like I did. :)

Let's get into it.



Revenue is Not Income

Something you probably already know.

Straight up, you need to understand that if you do eventually hit that magic 6-figure number, you probably won't be taking all that money home.

Let's run a quick hypothetical calc.

Gross Revenue for the year: \$118,156.50
Subtract GST: - \$10,741.50
Net Revenue for the year: \$107,415
Subtract Expenses: - \$24,381
Net Salary: \$83,034
Subtract Super (Salary Sacrifice): -\$7,000

Total Taxable Income: \$76,034

(plus about \$2,200 in GST deductions)

So making \$118k per year, the amount you'll actually have in your pocket come EOFY could be about \$78,000.

It's still 10k higher than that average we calculated earlier – but not a 6-figure salary. That might come the next year.

You're still considered a six-figure business. It's measured by the dollars you bring in. You'll just need to adjust your goals to make sure you end up getting a six-figure profit too.

Calculating Expenses

You might look at this and think you couldn't possibly have \$24,000 in expenses running a freelancing business.

But it all adds up, big time! Here are some of the things you might need to fork out on.

- INSURANCE
- Office space (even a hotdesk)
- Advertising
- SEO Management
- Your software (eg. the Adobe Creative Cloud)
- Storage (eg. Dropbox)
- Email (eg. Google Workspace)
- Stock Photos (eg. Adobe Stock)
- Backups (eg. iCloud, external hard drives)
- Hardware (eg. Macbook Pro)
- Website expenses (eg. Domain, Hosting, Plugins or subscriptions)
- Professional Development (eg. Online Courses, or a book on how to make 100k)

Not only that, but if you want to grow, you'll have to start thinking about your expenses as investments.

Spending money to make money is completely normal (more on that later). It's why a lot of businesses don't break even for a few years - before even thinking about profit. As a freelance graphic designer, you've got a foot up over retail businesses, because you don't have startup costs like ordering literally hundreds of thousands of products or parts you then have to sell to recoup your startup expenses first.

But you are starting from nothing.

If you want to be pocketing 100k every year, you'll need to get accustomed to your average yearly expenses/investments and then factor them in when setting revenue goals.

Some are bigger than others. Marketing will take a huge chunk out of your revenue. Software is a big expense every year. Insurance is generally at least \$30 per month for each type you choose to have. And unfortunately, most of these expenses are non-negotiable.

+ Tip 1 Worksheet: Calculating Your Expenses

List all the startup expenses you can possibly think of.

Then, do some research and calculate how much it'll cost you over a year.

How does this affect your revenue goal? How much money are you going to have to earn to balance out your overheads?

My one-off startup expenses

My regular monthly expenses

Over a year, this means I'll be spending...

The salary I want to take home each year is...

So altogether, I'm going to have to be making this much yearly revenue to offset my expenses and provide the take-home salary I want.

want more?

head over to thedesignerplaybook.net.au to buy the 50-page, 8-chapter full version for \$169.00AUD.