

QUANTITY SURVEYING

THE ULTIMATE 2025 GUIDE TO BECOMING A FREELANCE QUANTITY SURVEYOR



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INTRODUCTION



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INTRODUCTION

Why This Guide Matters

If you're a Quantity Surveyor tired of salary ceilings, office politics, and rigid schedules, freelancing in 2025 might just be the breakthrough you've been waiting for. With thousands of job ads still outpacing candidate availability and permanent salaries struggling to keep up with inflation, clients are leaning more than ever on capable freelance Qs who can hit the ground running.

This guide walks you through exactly how to break free. From setup to compliance, marketing to mindset—this is your end-to-end roadmap for launching, stabilising, and scaling your freelance career. Whether you're currently in a permanent position or recently between roles, this guide is built to give you a structured, confident route forward.



2. WHY FREELANCE? THE HONEST PROS & CONS

1.1 Pros:

- **Earn More:** Day rates range from £350–£500+ depending on your niche. That's £90k–£130k annually (often more with multiple contracts). With strong demand and the right expertise, you can take control of your earnings in ways not possible in permanent roles.
- **Flexibility:** Choose your clients. Work your schedule. Take holidays when you want. You can build your year to suit family, lifestyle, or even long-haul travel.
- **Freedom from Politics:** No internal red tape. Focus on delivery, not office drama. Freelancers are brought in to solve problems, not to sit in committees.
- **Project Variety:** Exposure to new builds, civils, infrastructure, disputes, PFI—you decide your path. Working across different sectors allows you to rapidly grow your expertise and avoid stagnation.
- **Work-Life Autonomy:** Freelancing gives you more than a financial edge—it gives you back time. You can design your week to reflect your priorities, from school runs to side businesses.

1.2 Cons:

- **No work = no pay:** You must manage your pipeline and keep your name in the market.
- **You're your own boss:** That includes accounts, marketing, compliance. It's empowering, but it takes discipline.
- **No perks:** No pension, sick pay, or holiday cover—you've got to plan for it. You must manage risk proactively.
- **Isolation:** Working solo or remotely may not suit everyone. Building a support network helps.

But here's the truth: the best freelancers don't see these as problems—they see them as levers of control. And you don't have to go it alone. With the right systems and suppliers in place, you can stay focused on what you do best.

3. SETTING UP TO WIN

2.1 Legal Setup

- Limited Company is usually the best structure. It gives tax efficiency and personal protection. You can also access a wider range of contracts and clients.
- Consider using an umbrella company if you prefer simplicity and plan to work mostly inside IR35.
- Consult with a contractor-specialist accountant before you start trading. They can help you set up correctly and avoid common mistakes.

2.2 Registration Checklist

- Register your company at Companies House.
- Open a business bank account separate from your personal banking.
- Register for Corporation Tax with HMRC.
- Register for VAT if over the threshold—or voluntarily if it suits your client base.

2.3 Insurance Essentials

- Professional Indemnity (PI): Covers claims of negligence, mistakes or failure to deliver.
- Public Liability: Protects against claims if you injure someone or damage property.
- Employers Liability: Required if you hire staff or subcontractors.
- IR35 Tax Liability Insurance: Offers peace of mind if you are investigated.

2.4 Essential Tools

- Accounting software (FreeAgent, Xero, QuickBooks)
- Invoice & contract templates
- Proposal documents and rate cards
- Project management or time tracking tools like Trello, Harvest, Notion

2.5 Building the Financial Foundations

- Set aside 20–30% of income for tax.
- Consider a personal pension or limited company investment plan.
- Create a 3–6 month emergency fund to manage downtime.
- Understand your tax return deadlines and reporting obligations.



4. BUILDING YOUR BRAND

3.1 Online Presence

A simple website is enough—a clear services page, project highlights, a short bio, and contact details. Tools like Squarespace or Wix are beginner-friendly.

A LinkedIn company page helps create legitimacy. Add your brand visuals, tagline, and list past projects.

Use Canva or Figma to create a branded CV and proposal deck.

3.2 Portfolio & CV

Focus on outcomes, not just responsibilities. Use metrics: cost savings, programme improvements, dispute resolution.

Include photos or case studies (with permission).

Make each application or proposal client-specific—generic documents will lose you work.

3.3 Market Positioning

Define your niche. Where do you do your best work? Claims support? PFI lifecycle? M&E cost management?

Being niche makes you memorable—and more in-demand. Clients want experts, not generalists.

3.4 Authority and Visibility

Post insights on LinkedIn once a week. Share lessons, thoughts, or industry commentary.

Comment on relevant industry posts. Add value. Stay visible.

Consider joining forums, virtual roundtables or events that attract your ideal clients.

5. LANDING YOUR FIRST CONTRACTS

4.1 The Notice Period Dilemma

A 1-month notice is manageable. Any longer, and you risk missing out. Clients rarely wait. Consider using annual leave or negotiating a reduction if you're serious about going freelance.

4.2 Prospecting Channels

Connect directly with Commercial Directors and Contracts Managers on LinkedIn.

Use reputable freelance-focused agencies and consultancies.

Attend networking breakfasts, seminars, or client events in your sector.

4.3 Application & Interview Tips

Your proposal should mirror the client brief. Highlight how fast you can mobilise and add value.

Have a rate card but be flexible. Understand the scope before you quote.

Ask what success looks like. This shows you're commercially minded.

4.4 Managing Your Pipeline

Keep track of leads, enquiries, proposals and follow-ups.

Stay in touch with past clients—they're often your next project.

Don't ghost anyone. Even if it's a no, leave the door open for next time.



6. UNDERSTANDING IR35



5.1 What It Is

- IR35 determines if your contract is truly self-employed or "disguised employment".
- It affects your tax liability—and can affect your take-home if mishandled.

5.2 Status Determination

- If the client is a medium/large business, they must assess IR35 status.
- If they're small (2 of: <£10.2m turnover, <£5.1m assets, <50 staff), the responsibility is yours.

5.3 Staying Outside IR35

- Avoid being controlled like an employee.
- Ensure you can send a substitute.
- Use your own equipment and methods.
- Work project-to-project, not indefinitely.
- Have a strong, service-led contract.

5.4 Documentation & Evidence

- Keep your own website, branded invoice templates, and service agreements.
- Show multiple clients across the year.
- Never request holidays or approval for leave.

7. FREELANCE MYTHS (AND THE TRUTH BEHIND THEM)

“FREELANCERS JUST CAN’T HOLD A PERM JOB.”

**THE BEST FREELANCE QSS ARE SHARP, PROFESSIONAL, AND IN-DEMAND.
CLIENTS REBOOK THEM CONTINUOUSLY.**

“IR35 is too risky.”

It’s not—if you structure your contracts properly and operate
like a business.

“FREELANCING IS UNSTABLE.”

**IT CAN BE—BUT IF YOU BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS AND MANAGE CASH WELL,
IT’S MORE STABLE THAN PERM WORK.**

“You’re always looking for the next job.”

Not if you specialise. Repeat business is the norm for
top contractors.

8. RECOMMENDED SUPPLIERS & CONTACTS



To help you get started with confidence, we've compiled a shortlist of proven, trustworthy providers:

- Insurance: Kingsbridge Contractor Insurance – experts in Professional Indemnity, IR35 Tax Cover, Public & Employers' Liability (sam.steel@kingsbridge.co.uk).
- Accountancy & Limited Company Setup: Brookson – long-standing specialist in contractor accounting, with great support and resources for first-timers.
- Freelance Support & Market Insight: clearnorth – strategic support for freelance QSs, access to high-calibre contract roles, and help navigating IR35 setup and client negotiation.

CONCLUSION: OWN YOUR CAREER

Freelancing in 2025 isn't just an alternative—it's an upgrade. For Quantity Surveyors with ambition, skill, and the hunger for something more, it offers a faster path to freedom and fulfilment.

Done properly, it's not risky. It's smart. Structured. Scalable. You're not going it alone—you're building something with intention.

The system isn't broken. It's just not built for you. So build your own. This guide is your blueprint.

Start here. Then take the first step.



“We would like to extend our thanks to the industry professionals, employers, and Quantity Surveyors who contributed to this guide, whether through our roundtable events, placements, or surveys. Special recognition also goes to data insights from LinkedIn polls, The Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Office for National Statistics. .”

CONTACT US

“The QS market is more competitive than ever. Whether you’re looking to build high-performing teams or take the next step in your career, clearnorth is here to guide you. Our exclusive salary insights, articles, and resources provide the clarity you need to make informed decisions in this fast-moving market

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