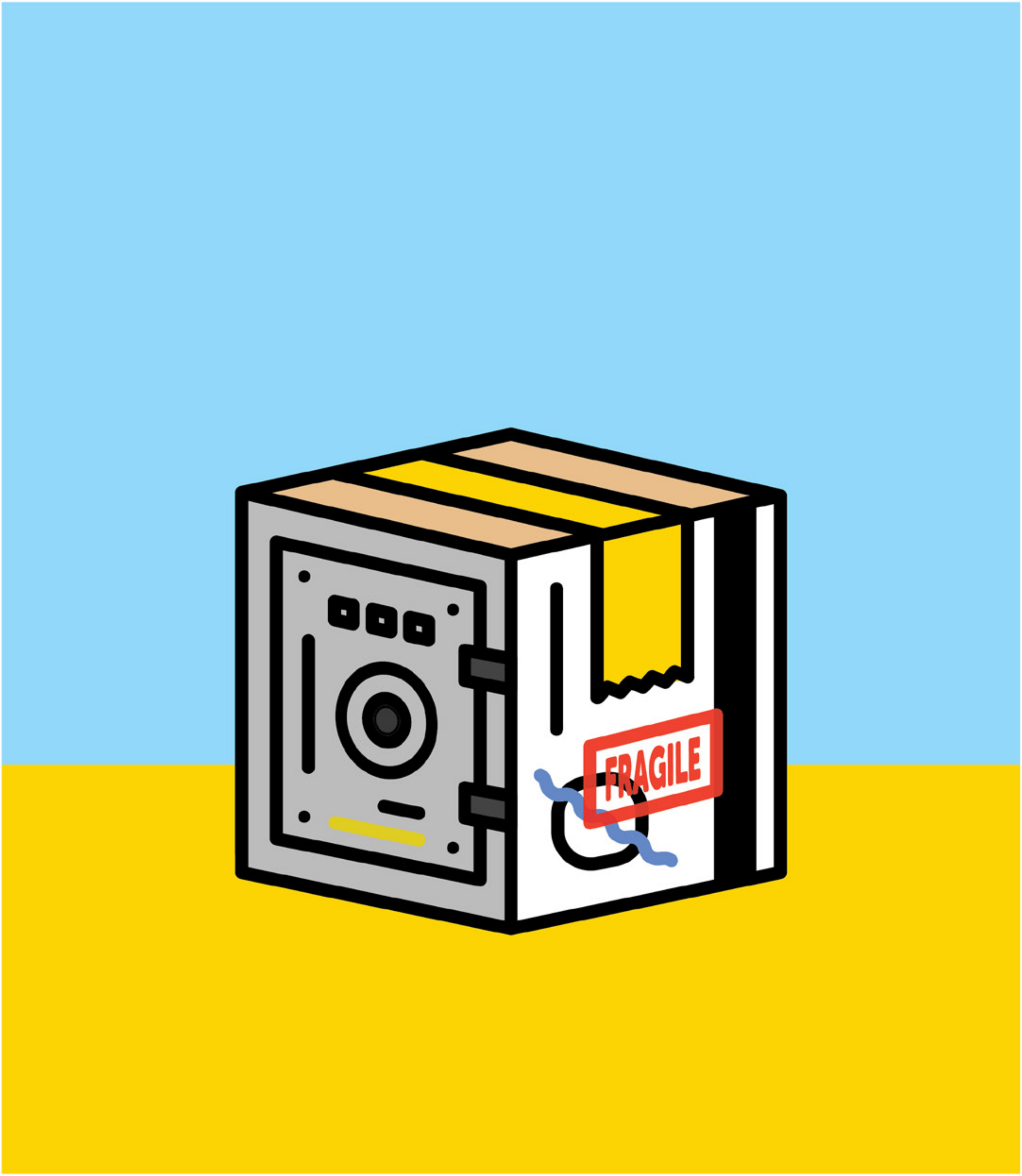


How to handle your client's money

Let's navigate the cluttered world of billing management. We'll cover tips on keeping a schedule, working with sensitive information, making a profit, and the best way to handle your client's money!

You just landed a client — congrats! That's super exciting, but it's time to get down to business.

You've already started planning out what your customer's needs are, and it's time to begin designing, developing, and pushing the site live.

When you're working for yourself, there are so many different things to keep track of at once: deadlines, emails, clients...the list goes on. But perhaps the most important (and often the most stressful) aspect of the job is handling your client's money to pay for website costs (such as the domain name or hosting).

While for some people it may seem like an easy-peasy task, there's no getting around the pressure surrounding managing other people's money.

In the end, it all boils down to establishing a great client relationship. That starts with your trust (and a few great tips and resources to help with the nitty-gritty details)! Ready to create a better client experience? Before we dive into money management, let's chat about something that's important to all aspects of your client relationship.

Transparency is key

While the numbers matter, it's also important to remember that your clients want to know exactly what they're getting because no one wants to feel tricked. There shouldn't be any surprises, fees, or misunderstandings about where their money is going. Understanding what you're paying for is important to everyone.

Whatever makes your client feel most comfortable is your best bet. If you're comfortable creating a list of what you provide, then give them the list and a total dollar amount. If they would prefer a breakdown of what each service costs, it might make them more confident in their choices. Again, trust is the most important part of any client relationship.

> *"Understanding what you're paying for is important to everyone.*

This is important to keep in mind as we move forward. Now that we're all clear about transparency, we're ready to dive into money management!

The struggles of billing management

There are so many aspects to billing management, and keeping track of everything can be a bit tricky. The good news is you can take comfort in knowing there are so many people out there who have dealt with the same struggles of billing management (and managed to simplify the process)!

To discover the best way to manage your client's money, let's explore three of the most common methods (and their pros and cons)!

LEAVING THE BILL UP TO YOUR CLIENTS

Hoping your clients figure it out themselves is a major shot in the dark, especially when you're working on a tight schedule. It leaves a lot up to chance and you don't want to have to hold their hand through the entire process. While it may not seem like a big deal, you want to be confident they know exactly what plan to buy, how to set up the accounts, and when everything needs to be paid for.

Sometimes the easiest way to make sure your clients are accountable for their projects is reminding them of the consequences. For example, without a payment to the hosting company, the client's site might get shut down or delay your development on their project.

Often times payments can be time sensitive, so you never want to get stuck waiting for your clients to pay the bill to keep the process moving. And if you do get stuck waiting, money should NEVER come out of your own pocket. (Unless you're packaging your services and reselling hosting, but that's a whole other conversation.)

> *"Another benefit of packaging your services to upsell clients is that you can start to generate some recurring revenue – the golden ticket to a reliable business model."*
>
> *Morgan Smith, Layout*

It's not your responsibility to sign the check at the end of the day; it's always your client's money that fills the bill. While this can be a little frustrating, it's a necessary evil that you just need to be patient with.

While this method is nice because your client's maintain their own account, it's not so nice because it leaves a lot of room for error (or leaves you in the position of walking them through every step of the account setup). And once you start walking your clients through the process, that's usually what leads people to the next method of billing management: completing the entire process for them and handling the client's credit card information.

HANDLING YOUR CLIENT'S BILLING INFORMATION

While taking care of the bill on behalf of your clients may seem like a better solution than just letting them figure it out on their own, it can cause some headaches as well. Using your client's billing information can feel uncomfortable for everyone, which leads to the next pain point: working with your client's sensitive information.

WORKING WITH SENSITIVE INFORMATION

“What’s your password?”

If someone asked you that, wouldn’t you feel awkward and maybe a little uncomfortable giving out that kind of information? Well, that’s how your clients feel if you start asking for their credit card information or billing credentials. This is why establishing trust is so important when it comes to working with your clients (and their confidential information).

Think about it: have you ever had a spreadsheet of passwords, written down an account number on a sticky note, or had a notes file on your phone with usernames? You’re not alone, but don’t EVER do that again.

Juggling passwords and billing information from multiple clients puts extra liability on you. And that’s definitely some unneeded stress. The most important thing to remember is to find a secure way to keep track of everything, and that means no more password spreadsheets!

THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Let’s clarify one thing first: what qualifies as “sensitive information?”

Here’s a good rule of thumb: if it’s something you’re only comfortable sharing with your mom, your partner, or your cat, it’s probably sensitive information.

That’s probably more information that you thought, huh?

If you absolutely HAVE TO manage billing information on behalf of your clients, make sure all the information is under lock-and-key! (But not an actual lock and key, that’s not very secure in today’s modern age.) Your spreadsheet just doesn’t cut it anymore, either. You’re running a digital career, so keep your information under digital-lockdown.

While there are a million ways to keep track of sensitive information, you want to find a way that’s secure. The good news is there are so many resources out there to help you keep all your confidential information and notes protected. These are some safe and secure options to consider:

- **1Password**
- **LastPass**
- **Keeper**

These resources will help keep your client's information more secure, but then you're still left with the problem of juggling accounts and sharing login information. Think about it: To set up the billing on behalf of your client, you're probably either logging into their account, transferring credentials back and forth, or sharing passwords.

Even with a password management tool, that's a sticky situation to be in.

So maybe you decide you don't want to deal with their sensitive information, but still want to have control over billing. Considering taking care of all the money management yourself?

BUYING HOSTING FOR THE CLIENT WITH YOUR OWN ACCOUNT

So maybe your best option is just to take care of all the billing yourself, from your own accounts. This ensures the site is set up with the right hosting plan with the right features and you don't have to deal with your client's billing information. Seems like an alright plan, but there are still a few hiccups.

As the account owner, you're the one responsible for communication from the host to the client. That means you need to keep an eye out for any maintenance updates, password resets, or notifications from the host, and then forward them to your client. That's probably not something your client is paying you for and can eat up a lot of your billable time. Or worse, if something happens and you're no longer able to work on the site, your client's totally out because you own the account information.

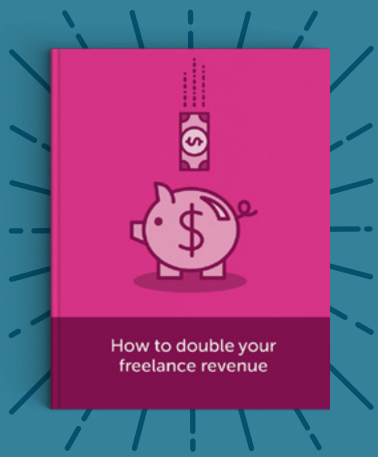
For these reasons, it's not a good idea to take money out of your own account for a client's project. If you MUST handle the billing from your own accounts, you need to make sure it's your client's money. This means never investing a cent of your own and not moving forward with payments until you've been given the amount necessary to cover expenses from your client. This is where staying organized, calculating expenses, and staying on-time is key!

> *"It's not a good idea to take money out of your own pockets for a client's project.*

DO THE MATH

You're dealing with your clients' hard-earned money, so it's important to make sure you're accounting for all the details. No one likes getting the bill and then having to pay for something forgotten or getting an additional fee a week later.

And if budgeting just isn't your thing, there are resources out there to help you answer some of these questions like QuickBooks or Mint. These tools will help you figure out your costs so you can handle your client's money like a pro!



Looking for a new way to put some weight in your wallet or wiggle room in your budget? Check out these money-making tips to double your revenue as a freelancer. Work smarter, not harder with this free guide!

This means you have to be realistic about your prices. Ask yourself:

- **Is it feasible to offer X, Y, and Z services?**
- **How long will this project take? (maximum and minimum)**
- **What will that time cost me?**
- **What are the recurring costs?**
- **Are there any additional fees to consider?**
- **When do I need the money by?**

Again, you never want money to come out of your own pocket; it should always be on the client's bill. It's a simple equation, but you don't want to forget the little things that add to it.

What it costs you + your working rate = what your client pays

IS "NONE OF THE ABOVE" AN OPTION?

So maybe you're not thrilled with any of these options. I don't blame you. It's best to have control over the process without all the confusion trying to communicate it to your clients. With that, your clients will feel so much more relief and so much less confused. After all, they don't really want to see the behind the scenes — that's what they paid you for!

What's the option without all the personal liability? You don't want to have any issues with billing or getting charged to your personal accounts.

There is a solution (and we're getting to that part!), but the key here is to be clear about expectations for your clients and yourself!

Why **not** handling your client's money is the best way to handle their money

So up until this point, we've concluded there really isn't an ideal, fool-proof way to deal with sensitive information and juggle payments.

We've all been there. Trying to handle client money (and everything that come with it) can be a major pain. You charge your clients, distribute their money everywhere, keep track of where everything goes, manage all those passwords...And let's face it, it clogs up your to-do list, time adds up, and you could be spending that time doing your best work.

WHY THE HOSTING BILL SHOULD BE UNDER YOUR CLIENT

The question of "who takes the bill" is always up for debate. But when it comes to working with your clients, the answer is always the client, and here's why.

First, if you, as the designer, are the one on the account, that means you're getting all the notifications. That puts you in charge of maintenance updates, password resets, and all the little things that can pile up. You don't want to be the one responsible for that or having to forward all that information on to your clients constantly.

> *"The question of "who takes the bill" is always up for debate.*

Second, you don't want a bad breakup where you have to give your client all their stuff back. If you have a falling out with your client, then there are messy details like transferring ownership of the site or switching the billing.

Third, if anything unexpected or drastic were to happen to you, it's bad news for your clients. Your clients are just out of luck and would come across the same problems of transferring ownership or switching billing all on their own. Talk about a tough client experience.

Managing money can be difficult for anyone and everyone, but the pressure's even more stressful when you're entrusted with the hard-earned cash from someone else. That's why sometimes the best way to manage money is just the opposite: don't.

That's right. Game changer.

The key to managing your client's money is to never actually have anything to do or any interaction with it whatsoever!

While everything we've discussed so far certainly can help you manage your client's money, the better alternative is to be as "hands off" as possible. What if I told you there was a WordPress hosting company that understands the workflow of freelancers and gives you the option to have your client pay the bill, all while you still maintain access to the site with your own separate login? That's Flywheel, and that's the real solution.

How to transfer billing to your clients with Flywheel

You don't have to touch the billing whatsoever with Flywheel's billing transfer feature! We understand that managing your client's money is one of the biggest pain points as a freelancer, which is why we built the ability to transfer the bill right into our hosting platform.

> *"You get to keep working without a single stress about payments.*

This easy workflow tool allows you to keep working without a single stress about payments. With this simple, one-click solution, you don't have to worry about password sharing or insecure spreadsheets ever again! This allows you to transfer ownership of the site to your client while you remain a collaborator. And as a collaborator, you'll be able to maintain access to the site, continue developing, or just pop back in for maintenance later.

Let's walk through how simple this process really is!

1. CREATE YOUR FREE FLYWHEEL ACCOUNT

First things first, head on over to the Flywheel website and sign up for a free account! It's a simple process that take just 30 seconds and doesn't cost a penny to try.

Interested in moving over an existing site instead? We'll migrate it to our platform for free! Once we get it transferred over, you'll be able to review it and then send the bill to your client!

2. CREATE A NEW SITE AND FILL OUT THE BASIC INFORMATION

Once you're in the Flywheel dashboard, click the "Create a site" button and fill out the basic information like site name and WordPress account.

3. SELECT "MY CLIENT'S PAYING" WHEN IT COMES TO BILLING

Transfer site ownership and payment responsibility all in one click, but still keep your development access! Your client will get a simple email to help them set up their free Flywheel account and insert their billing information.

4. MAINTAIN ACCESS TO SITE

There's no need to worry about wait time or delaying your development process. Once you've selected the "My client's paying" option, you'll still have full access to the site to make changes as you need! Your client will have 14 days to pay while you're working on the demo site, so there's no halting progress.

> *"Providing simple workflow tools like this helps everyone keep moving forward!*

It comes down to one thing: our mission here at Flywheel is to help you do your best work, and that includes helping your clients. By providing simple workflow tools like this, it helps everyone keep moving forward!

Conclusion

While there are a bunch of wrong ways to handle your client's money, establishing a workflow for billing management will help you and your clients. We've looked at resources to help you keep track of information, like 1Password, and tools to help budget your work, like Mint.

And while handling your client's money yourself is still an option, there's a much simpler alternative. As we've learned, the key to handling your client's money is to not handle their money at all. The more hands-off you can be, the less liability and more time you'll have back on your plate.

With Flywheel's simple and convenient billing transfer feature, there's no dealing with budgeting resources, no spreadsheets of passwords, and no more wasting your valuable time. Most importantly, there's no money coming out of your own pocket.

If you're looking for someone you know will have your back, finding the right hosting partner can actually save the day. A reputable host can help establish that trust and make your client feel like they have a little more control over handling their own money.

Give Flywheel a try — it's easy and free to sign up. There's no need to handle the bill, and your workflow will thank you!

What is Flywheel?

Flywheel is a delightful platform that empowers designers, developers, and digital agencies to focus on what they do best — building beautiful, functional sites for their clients. We make it a breeze to create and develop WordPress sites, handle hosting, manage projects, and ultimately scale your business.

Stop wasting time on server management, security plugins, caching, and all those other boring repetitive tasks that take your focus away from growing your business and jeopardize your relationship with clients. Get Flywheel and get back to doing what you love.

SIGN UP NOW

getflywheel.com

FLYWHEEL