What in the world was I doing? Why on earth would I quit my stable, good-paying editing job to become a full-time freelance editor? I liked stability and the comfort of a steady paycheck. But I’d also always had an entrepreneurial spirit. I’d been the kid who was constantly brainstorming ways to make money—whether by selling hair scrunchies (if you were alive in the ’80s, you know what they are) or teaching piano lessons. So the idea of starting my own editing business was intriguing at the same time that it was frightening.

In addition to craving stability, I’m cautious and I like to think things through carefully before making big decisions. So I let the idea of starting my own business percolate. I began researching online what would be involved in making the jump. Where would I find clients? How would I market my services? What expenses would I have? How would my tax responsibilities change? Along with this research, I was also working on my MBA, so I paid special attention to course principles that were relevant to a one-person business.  

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1. Though completing an MBA helped me start my business, freelancers do not need an MBA to establish a profitable gig. If you follow the principles I discuss in this book, you can make your business successful—without paying tens of thousands of dollars for a business degree.
After weeks and then months of researching and planning, I felt confident that I could become a full-time freelancer who earned as much as (or even more than) an in-house editor does and that I could also establish a lifestyle that I enjoyed—something that was definitely lacking while I was an employee for someone else. With this confidence, I set a date: the day I would quit my in-house job and become self-employed. The date was many months away, so I could ensure that when the day came, I’d be ready for the exciting but sometimes bumpy adventure as a business owner. But I also made the deadline somewhat aggressive; I wanted to ensure that I stayed focused on my goal and that I didn’t lose motivation because the date seemed so far away. And the more I thought about the idea, the more excited I was about it, so it would have felt like torture to wait much longer than I did.

I learned a lot in the months leading up to my official start date, and I’ve learned even more in the years since. I’ve discovered strategies that are golden, as well as practices to skip. I’ve discovered aspects of freelancing that I love and aspects that I want to avoid whenever possible (and how to do just that). I’ve become passionate about learning how to improve my business, not only so that it operates the best it can but also so that I love owning it. Along the way, I’ve also become passionate about sharing my experiences with others who are interested in the freelance lifestyle. I want them to learn from my successes and failures so they can get on the fast track to operating high-achieving businesses themselves. Because of my desire to help others, I’ve developed and taught freelancing courses at Brigham Young University, presented at conferences and training meetings, and provided one-on-one mentoring to individuals interested in starting or expanding freelance businesses.

This passion is also the reason I’ve written this book. I’ve read a lot of articles, books, and other materials on freelancing, and some truly have been game changers for me and my business. But none of
them included all the elements I consider to be vital for establishing a thriving freelance editing business. So I decided to write a book that included all those essentials, as well as other topics that freelance editors commonly wonder about. Now, I’m hoping this book will be a game changer for you.

In writing this book, I’ve collaborated with entrepreneur Aaron Ostler, who has business experience in a variety of industries, from publishing to real estate to internet marketing. Like me, he learned business best practices largely from trial and error. Through his expert networking skills, he’s made connections that have led to business opportunities across the globe. Because of his strategic business mindset, he is often the lead partner in businesses he’s helped develop and is frequently asked for business advice from other entrepreneurs. Thanks to his business background and acumen, he’s helped refine the business strategies included in this book. Of course, Aaron and I haven’t relied on our experiences alone. Over the years, I’ve read up on a lot of topics related to freelancing, and in this book I share the best information I’ve found. I’ve also talked with and learned from many other freelance editors over the years, and their best practices are reflected in the ideas I include in the book. I also include some quotations from freelance editors so you can get a glimpse of their experiences and perspectives.

Why This Book Is for You

This book is for all editors, even those who never plan to complete a single freelance project. Why the latter group? Because I’ve found that a lot of editors don’t set out to freelance but that they eventually

2. In citing ideas I include in the book, I cite popular sources when I haven’t able to find scholarly sources. I hope that in the future, more research will be conducted on freelancing, freelance editors, and editing.
move into the freelance side of editing. They may freelance only sporadically, or they may take up freelancing as their main source of income. Some editors willingly jump the corporate ship, whereas others are escorted off because of budget cuts, a bad fit, or some other reason. This latter group of editors might not want to freelance long-term, but freelancing short-term can help pay the bills while these editors are searching for new in-house positions.

Whether you plan to freelance full-time, for only a short time, or only occasionally, you’ll benefit from applying the concepts in this book—your business will likely be more successful, and you’ll enjoy it more. For example, editors tend to love words but fear numbers, making budgets and taxes terrifying. This book will help you feel more confident in your ability to maintain personal and business budgets and to meet all your tax responsibilities (while decreasing the amount you have to pay). As another example, numerous editors are introverts and loathe the idea of networking and marketing themselves. In this book, I present a number of ways to market your business (including many that don’t require face-to-face interaction), and I also provide ideas on how to become more comfortable talking with people about your business, often in low-key ways that don’t feel salesy. As a final example, editors often struggle with perfectionism, so this book covers ways to turn this potentially destructive trait into an ally. By doing so, you’ll have a better quality of life and you may even accept projects or pursue clients that you otherwise wouldn’t because of fear of failure.

What We’re Going to Cover

Now that I’ve mentioned a few of the book’s concepts and how they can help you, let’s go into more depth. My focus is on providing information that’s relevant not only to editors new to freelancing but also to editors who’ve been freelancing for a while (even for decades) and
who want to refine their processes to make their businesses more enjoyable, efficient, and financially rewarding. So, even if you’ve been freelancing for years, don’t skip the chapters that seem directed to newbies (with the exception of chapter 1). You’ll gain insight that can help you amp up your business—even if you think you know the topic of discussion inside and out.

With that being said, let’s take a look at the topics in this book. We’ll start with the pros and cons of editing, skills and traits that contribute to success, and how to know when you’re ready to become a full-time freelancer. Then we’ll move on to business considerations, including how to choose a business name, which type of business entity to select, how to create a business plan, and what business costs to budget for. We’ll also talk about developing a strategic mindset through establishing a vision for your business, setting and (actually) achieving your goals, and getting involved in mentoring.

Next, we’ll tackle the subject of marketing. Because this topic is critical to business success, we’ll explore different aspects of marketing in different chapters. We’ll start by discussing whether you need a niche and how to find clients. We’ll then go into the details of how to implement the most effective and efficient strategies for securing business and keeping your schedule full. From there, we’ll look at options for creating a website and what to include on your site. Finally, we’ll discuss how to maximize the benefits of LinkedIn.

After covering marketing, we’ll examine pricing, including how to decide what to charge, how to present your price quote, and how to overcome objections to your quote. Then we’ll focus on the elements of contracts and invoices, which increase your likelihood of getting paid—and paid on time. Next, we’ll discuss strategies to increase your productivity, followed by how to find work/life balance (and, I promise, it is possible—if you take the right approach). Then we’ll shift our focus to taxes and other financial considerations, and we’ll discuss the information in a way that won’t make you want to run