

Success Story #3

Sandra Redlich, Freelance Marketing Consultant, Copywriter & Translator

Maddie Duke 00:04

You're listening to *The State Of Work*, the podcast by Lano. *The State Of Work* is about finding your place in the changing world of work as an individual or an organization. In each episode, we dive into some of the benefits and limitations we face when it comes to remote and flexible work. We discuss how we work, how we hire and manage people and how we live in this increasingly global workplace. I'm your host, Maddie Duke. And in this week's Success Story, we get a peek into the life of a freelancer. Sandra Redlich is a freelance marketing consultant copywriter, translator and project manager. Originally from Germany, she's permanently settled in the beautiful city of Melbourne, Australia. Sandra spoke about what it's been like to establish herself as a freelancer in a new country, some of the challenges of working as a freelancer, and she shared some advice for people just starting out their freelance career.

Maddie Duke 01:00

Hi, Sandra, thanks so much for joining me on *The State Of Work*.

Sandra Redlich 01:04

Hi, thanks for having me.

Maddie Duke 01:06

Sandra, you are originally from Berlin and you're currently based in Melbourne. How long have you been based in Melbourne for?

Sandra Redlich 01:13

Yeah, I've been in Melbourne since.... I think last year February, but in Australia for a little bit longer now. I'm thinking which year do we have? The last year kind of just flew past. Like coming up on coming up on two years now.

Maddie Duke 01:29

Great. Um, so tell me a little... tell me what do you do? What do you do for work? And also what brought you to Melbourne?

Sandra Redlich 01:37

Yeah, so I'm a freelance marketing consultant, but mainly also a copywriter and translator. It's always a bit funny. There's so many descriptions for what you do, because I kind of also do social media and some project management and just a little bit of everything. But I guess the main thing is copywriting and translating. And I do that for both German clients, because as you said, I'm from Berlin originally, and also Australian clients or international clients in general, in general. And I'm in Melbourne, because my partner's Australian. We met in Germany, actually. Um, so he was working over there. And we met and, yeah, I kind of decided together that we might give it a try over here.

Maddie Duke 02:22

Fantastic!

Sandra Redlich 02:23

...and I did the move.

Maddie Duke 02:25

That's awesome. So well today, I'd like to talk to you a little bit about both living in Melbourne and working for clients around the world and also about freelancing in general, so maybe we'll start with what.. How long have you been freelancing for but you're already freelancing before you made the move to Australia?

Sandra Redlich 02:47

Yeah, I was already freelancing in Germany. So I started off doing it as kind of like a side hustle while I was still full time employed. And then it kind of took over. But the goal always was at that point to do it full time. So I've been doing it for..... four and a half years now, coming up on five.

Maddie Duke 03:06

Yeah, great. And you've made that huge move within that time, which is yeah, pretty amazing. What would you say your biggest challenge has been over the last four years?

Sandra Redlich 03:16

Yeah, my biggest challenge at first was kind of figuring out what I wanted to do, because I kind of, in the beginning, even had a hard time describing the one thing that I do, because I like to do a lot of different things. And that's the flexibility of not only where and when you work, but also what you work on.

Maddie Duke 03:33

Absolutely

Sandra Redlich 03:34

...that's the thing that I like, and that drew me to freelancing. So that was a big challenge in the beginning. And I still sometimes struggle with that. Because I also get a little bit excitable, and I see other people doing things. And then I'm like, I want to do that as well. It sounds really cool.

Maddie Duke 03:50

So relatable.

Sandra Redlich 03:51

Yeah, but I think one of the biggest fears concerning the move was if I was going to be able to keep my German clients, because obviously starting off in Germany, most of my clients were German back then. And I thought, oh, the time zone difference and just people might be scared even just seeing a foreign address on the invoice or, you know, how do I do it with the currency and all of these questions that you ask yourself. So that was the biggest fear that I had, which actually turned out to be not that bad at all.

Maddie Duke 04:25

Would you be able to step us through how you ended up navigating that, like, how did your German clients take the change when you decided to move and have you been able to manage the timezone reasonably well, or has it been a problem?

Sandra Redlich 04:43

Yeah, the timezone has actually not been a problem at all. I found the one but one thing is just open communication, just letting people know where you are and what works for you. And then just planning your day around it a little bit. So now my my, all my meetings and my calls are just in my evening time. And then of course, there's the funny difference with whenever there's daylight savings in Australia and the change of timezone in Germany. So right now we're eight hours apart, which is good for me. It will be 10 come our summer and your winter. So that'll make it a little bit more difficult.

Maddie Duke 05:19

Yep.

Sandra Redlich 05:20

But that has, yeah, as I said not been difficult at all. Because if you communicate it openly with people generally the response I get is people are very excited. And they get super excited about our I'm speaking to someone from the other side of the world and get that a lot still. So it's more.. happiness about it. Um, yeah, and in terms of making the move, because there was a transitional phase where I was still registered in Germany with all my business expenses and everything. And then when I actually switched to being registered here, not in Germany, here being Australia, I, yeah, just took that as an opportunity to get in touch with my clients and kind of say, hey, just to let you know, my invoicing address will change. But that's the only thing that changes for you.

Maddie Duke 06:10

Yeah, so establishing yourself as a freelancer in a new country, are there any ways that you've... or how have you connected locally with other businesses and freelancers in Australia or in Melbourne?

Sandra Redlich 06:25

That's actually been one of the biggest or still ongoing challenges, definitely, because my start and Melbourne kind of coincided with the start of the pandemic. And we had a pretty tough lockdown at the start of it, two lockdowns. And it was just really restricting, and there was just no way of mingling. So I did join some Facebook groups and did some LinkedIn research to find other people. But that, honestly, didn't really lead to anything. And I've never been a person that works well in co-working spaces. I actually function quite well on my own in my home office. So that also never really interested me. So I'm only now kind of starting to get out there and make more connections. And that kind of just came naturally. By putting yourself out there and just having conversations. Sometimes it's really as easy as just letting someone or oh, actually, I work in that field. And then I find a lot of times when people go, oh, I know someone who also works in marketing who does that, and then you start having conversations and that's really valuable.

Maddie Duke 07:33

Yep, there is one - just to be completely transparent to the listeners. I'm actually from Melbourne originally and now living in Berlin, so coincidentally, Sandra and I have kind of swapped places -

Sandra Redlich 07:45

Yeah.

Maddie Duke 07:46

Um, but if I can recommend to you and anyone listening from Australia, there's a fantastic freelance network group on Facebook called "Freelance Jungle", definitely check them out. Um, so let's talk a little bit about clients. If I can ask you what, what would your ideal client relationship look like?

Sandra Redlich 08:08

That's difficult, because you have so much to pick and choose from. But I think for freelancers, the one thing that's always kind of missing is security and money in job and work time, so how much time you actually get to spend on working. Because I think a lot of times people especially I find, back home in Germany, people always associate being self employed with working endless hours and being just flat out. And I mean, that's kind of a dream scenario, if you have the amount of work and the clients to, to be at that point and just outsource work. But you have to get to that place at first. So my first two years, three years, it was really up and down. Also, depending on how much I actually put myself out there because back in Germany, also, I really didn't network that much or as much as I could have. So it kind of took a little bit of time to get

established and have that work. But an ideal client, for me would be someone who's very transparent about how much they want to work with me, and what they expect of me. Because I find a lot of times people tend to see freelancers as this amazing option to just have one task outsourced quickly. And a lot of times, that is what it is and I do that as well. But it's really awesome if you get to be part of a team a little bit more and get a little bit more insights. And you feel valued and that information is shared with you because I think that's probably one of the biggest things is sharing information...

Maddie Duke 09:41

Yeah.

Sandra Redlich 09:42

...because I find especially as a copywriter, oftentimes you you get a quick briefing. And I like short briefings. I don't like the three page PDF documents that much. But it's nice to get some feedback after as well, just in terms of how is the article performing what were you actually looking to achieve with it? Are we achieving it? Is there anything I can take away from it in terms of changing the headlines, or we will would have liked a little bit more linking or a little bit more personable approach in the copy. So something that I can take away and learn from as well. So yeah, an ideal client would do that as well.

Maddie Duke 10:21

Yeah, that's a great point. Have you ever had to let go of a client, like resign or fire a client that just wasn't a good match?

Sandra Redlich 10:31

Yeah, I've thought about it a couple of times. Both of the cases actually been.... actually I did. And now that I'm thinking about it, I did, actually, yes, I did do that. And there were a couple of times where I considered it almost did it a lot of times, because of just the payments process being extremely difficult to handle with a lot of reminders, and just no replies, and you're just feeling like you're being ripped off, which has happened to me in the beginning, as well, where you do perform work, and then you never hear of them again, especially as a young freelancer or just starting out, you don't really know what to do. And I still am a little bit wary of that. I don't like yeah, weirdly enough, I don't like talking about finances with my clients too much in terms of, hey, where's my money. You just never like to remind people too much of that.

Maddie Duke 11:25

Yeah. It's interesting, because as a freelancer, you're essentially running your own business. And in addition to the service and skill that you're actually providing for a client, you've got to bring all these other skills like managing clients and managing payments and having those conversations that may not have originally been part of your ideal kind of skill set. Yeah, that is at least what I've found and it sounds a little bit like that as well with you.

Sandra Redlich 11:53

Definitely.

Maddie Duke 11:54

Do you have any rituals around or like celebrations around finishing a new project or any milestones along your freelance journey? And the reason I ask is, partly because I know it can be really hard to build community. And when you're, when you're in an employment situation, and you've got colleagues, and you're celebrating together internally, with everyone else in the office who's been working there, together as a freelancer, you're kind of a sole operator. And I think it can be really important to celebrate milestones for yourself. Is that something that you do?

Sandra Redlich 12:29

Not actively, I think it's a really good point that you're bringing up and I probably should do that more. One thing I have learned though, and I need to, like actively remind myself to do it, is just to share with my friends and family, what I'm doing and what I'm working on. Because a lot of times I get amazing feedback. And you know, you get that celebration that you would usually have from coworkers. But I guess it's a little bit difficult sometimes to bring it up. Because it's, it's hard to explain your work sometimes, especially to people who don't work in the industry. And then all the work you have to put into explaining it and kind of setting the framework to then go, hey, I did this amazing thing. And have an appropriate reaction or the reaction you find appropriate is a little bit difficult. But if you do break it down and make it more simple, I guess, people, the number one thing is people also just get excited, if you're excited. So if you tell them, hey, I did this thing, and it's really cool. They probably won't say oh I don't get it, why is it cool, I've never heard of this....

Maddie Duke 13:33

Yeah, they're just like, I don't get it. But yay, well done you!

Sandra Redlich 13:38

Exactly. And sometimes that's all you need, right? You just need...

Maddie Duke 13:43

Yeah definitely,

Sandra Redlich 13:45

.....someone's your cheerleader to kind of celebrate with you, yep.

Maddie Duke 13:46

Yeah. Do you have any sort of self care tips or rituals around making sure that you don't burn out or or overwork, like you mentioned earlier about? There is a bit of a, I mean, I would say there's almost two views. Like some people seem to think that freelance is like in between jobs and not really doing anything. And then other people understand that with freelancing, it's in self

employment, it's often more like you're actually never not working. If you're not working on client work. You're working on getting new clients and managing the admin side of your business. And it can really lead to burnout. And yeah, I wanted to ask about any preventative tips that you might have to share.

Sandra Redlich 14:29

I think just planning your day is a very big thing for me, routine, I guess, building a routine and a job that usually doesn't have a lot of routines. So now when I know I have a lot of calls or meetings in the evenings, I'll make sure that there's a period in the afternoon where I'll just take two hours off and just do things around the house, do a workout or just do something that is good for me. Also, what's really helped is I have a dog so I Every lunch break, we go for a walk for an hour. So that's really, that's become also routine. And it really helps to just get yourself away from the computer, you're not even thinking about it, you're fully focusing on walking and being outside and interacting with your dog. So that's definitely helped for me, and also planning my day around my own personal preferences. And not sticking so much to the nine to five office hours that we all know, because I did find or I still find that. I feel like I'm expected to sit at my computer at 9am, even though I don't have to, especially with the different timezones, people won't care if I sit at nine or a 10 or 11, or at seven in the morning.

Maddie Duke 13:57

But actually one of the benefits to freelancing

Sandra Redlich 13:59

Yeah, absolutely. But I actually found that I work better in the mornings, I'm more, especially if I'm writing creative copy that I'm way better in the mornings, and I tend to do more administrative work in the afternoons. So just planning my day around that and knowing that's, that's how it works best for you, that really helps.

Maddie Duke 16:08

Awesome. So would you have any advice? What advice would you have for someone that might just be starting out as a freelancer?

Sandra Redlich 16:19

Yeah, actually, one of my good friends is kind of in the process of doing that. And we talk about it a lot, obviously, because she asks for advice. And yeah, I think people get overwhelmed by the amount of information that is out there and the country-specific regulations you have to meet. I know Germany, especially can be very confusing with all of the paperwork in all of the administrative stuff that you need to do. So I think the number one advice would be just don't let that bring you down, don't let that steal your dream of being self employed. Because it is easy to be crushed by that and just say it's easier to just stick with a normal job. And also don't think, don't think you can't do it. And don't think you can't do it by yourself. Because I think a lot of people tend to what they see all this information. And then they think they have to hire an accountant immediately and pay for this and pay for that service. And kind of like

overwhelmingly, I'm not qualified for this, I need to outsource it. And I know that it is overwhelming. But you can figure it out, especially in the beginning, it does make sense to outsource certain things and certain tools and software's super helpful and it can actually really help you increase your productivity and spend time on the really important things. But I think you have to be a bit more aware and just have a little bit more experience to make these calls. So before you actually ever work for your first client, you don't need to download an expensive software that will help you do your taxes or I don't know or get a coach, or any of these things if you personally feel like that's what you need, that's obviously fine. But just from my experience, I think it's have a little bit of patience and just get started. Just start doing it. You learn so much by doing. You never stop learning. I'm still learning so much doing this work every day. And just embrace the chaos of it, I guess - at least in the beginning, because it'll be chaos.

Maddie Duke 18:22

Yes. That's great advice.

Sandra Redlich 18:25

Thank you.

Maddie Duke 18:27

Thanks so much for that advice. And also for your time today. Sandra. It's been really really nice getting a bit of an insight into what it's been like for you as someone who's moved internationally while building their freelance career. All the best to you. And thanks again so much for joining us on *The State Of Work*.

Sandra Redlich 18:46

Thanks for having me.

Maddie Duke 18:47

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