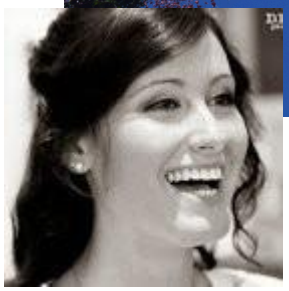
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Name: Ashlan Bonnell
Major: English
Graduation Year: 2012

Ashlan Bonnell is a Freelance Writer and Editor serving various industries. She currently serves as the Managing Editor for American Forests magazine. Read more on how Ashlan manages to balance family and work-life:

What is the day in the life like at your job?
After having my daughter, I transitioned from full-time employment to freelancing so that I can stay home with her. I have a current contracted gig with my former employer, where I still serve as the Managing Editor for American Forests magazine. I oversee all production aspects of each issue as well as handle contracts, invoices, dealings with our designer, etc., and edit all content and layouts. I am currently able to do this on my own hours as long as deadlines are met.

What do you love about your job?
I love the flexibility that freelancing provides. I love that I am able to stay home with my daughter and future children and avoid paying childcare costs, but I am also continuing my career and using my education. I also love that I can tailor my workload to my needs. Should we want some extra spending money to save for something, I can pick up more work. But, if things are hectic, I don't have to maintain as high of a workload.

What is challenging about your role?
Sometimes, it can be challenging to balance getting all my work done while my daughter is napping or without taking away from family time in the evenings. But, overall, it allots way more family time than if I was full-time. In general, the most pressing challenge to freelance work is essentially the instability of it. Most freelance work is a project-by-project basis. Often times, these are one-offs. So, ensuring a steady income flow can be difficult.

What are the benefits of working in this field?
The benefits are really centered around allowing you to have total control over your workload, type of content you are writing, etc. You are your own boss in a sense, and there are so many advantages to that.

What experiences did you have that prepared you for this role?
I worked very hard leading up to my transition to freelance to ensure I built relationships that would result in work down the pipeline. I also accepted freelance work on top of my full-time employment.

What do you see happening in the future for these types of careers?

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I think many companies have transitioned to the use of more freelance work as they save costs on full-time employees.

What should a student know about your field?
It can be extremely freeing, but also REQUIRES you to be a "go-getter." If you aren't motivated to do the prep-work to get freelance jobs, regardless if they don't pan out, you will certainly struggle to find success. You are the one required to find your work, and thus, get paid. So, you definitely have to put yourself out there.

What advice do you have for a student considering a career in your profession?
If you plan on freelance work, develop strong writing samples to send when you pitch publications. BE SURE you research each publication before sending a pitch. Never send blanket pitches, always tailor them! I personally would recommend starting with a full-time job out of school. Learn as much as you can, and use that time of stability to work hard and develop potential freelance relationships so that you have foreseeable work in the pipeline before making the transition.