

Another way to rip off freelancers!

“HERE IS your FastFunds payment breakdown for the assignment ‘Brooklyn’s Northside Media is Stiffing its Workers (HuffPost)’: payment \$700; transaction fee -\$52.50; total payment to you \$647.50.”

That was the message that greeted US freelance Luke O’Neil when he tried to pick up payment for a piece about an illustrator going unpaid for two years (top tip: stop doing the work long before that). That hefty cut to get paid immediately made Luke think: “am I being pushed into taking a payday loan?”

It turns out *Huffington Post* outsourced freelance payment admin to WorkMarket, catchline “the smartest way to organize, manage and pay your freelance contractors”. It’s now owned by payroll software corporation ADP. Luke found WorkMarket Vice-President Mousa Ackall announcing the service in January 2017: “thanks to Fast Funds Mobile, freelancers can gain instant access to their funds via the WorkMarket mobile app – offering the level of flexibility and effortless mobility that modern workers crave.”

“Ah, finally,” Luke sighs: “the level of flexibility and effortless mobility I

deserve.” It turns out that the deduction wasn’t strictly interest on a payday loan. It was a fee for “factoring”. This can be a legitimate business practice. If you’ve sold a lot of kit to a double-glazing installer, and you’re not sure about their creditworthiness, you can sell your invoice to a “factor”. The factor pays you less than face value, gives you some cash now, and takes on the risk and the debt-chasing.

Given this tradition, a company actively offering factoring to its suppliers might seem to indicate some confusion about its own creditworthiness. Factoring remains legitimate – if you make a freely and fully informed choice to make use of it.

Luke reports that options to be paid the boring old-fashioned way – in full – were less than obvious. So he blogged about it. He found video of a 2017 interview with the Chief Technology Office of the *New York Times*, Nick Rockwell, explaining how they use WorkMarket to manage the 5000 freelancers he said they have at any one time and up to 30,000 in the course of a year.

Straight away the *Huffington Post* responded that it’d disabled Fast-

FastFunds – Payment Breakdown

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Payment	\$700.00
Transaction Fee	-\$52.50
Total Payment to you	\$647.50

By clicking the 'Accept & Get Paid Now' button, you agree to our Terms of Service.

X CANCEL

ACCEPT & GET PAID NOW

Funds. A little later ADP issued a statement that they’d “decided to temporarily suspend WorkMarket’s FastFunds offer until we can review the practice more carefully.” Then the *New York Times* clarified that it had not in fact contracted with WorkMarket: the video had been posted prematurely and it had been taken down.

Blogger 3: factor 0.

The *Freelance* is very interested to hear from journalists who encounter similar schemes: email Xfactor@londonfreelance.org

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Many definitions of “irony” are satisfied by this screenshot

Trades Councils need you!

HAMMERSMITH and Fulham-Kensington and Chelsea Trades Council already has one delegate from LFB, but they want two. So if you live or work in these boroughs and would like to put yourself forward as LFB’s second delegate, contact the *Freelance*. Any LFB member who lives and works in a London borough can volunteer to be an LFB delegate on their local Trades Council. LFB already has delegates on the Waltham Forest Trades Council, while Camden has invited LFB to send one. For more on what Trades Councils are and what they do, see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1806tc.html

Afghanistan update

LONDON Freelance Branch Committee has established a sub-committee to discuss sending a delegation to Kabul to meet the Federation of Afghan Journalists, a newly-established journalists’ union formed from 17 organisations that existed before. Members of the sub-committee are: Safi, Tim and Mike.

The Federation of Afghan Journalists is in mourning following the killings of four more of its mem-

bers since April. As reported at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1809ifj.html nine journalists were killed in an April double suicide bombing in Kabul and a BBC reporter was assassinated in Khost province on the same day.

Mohammad Salim Inghar, a cameraman with Afghan national TV, is the latest victim. He was killed on October 18 in a Taliban attack in Kandahar, in which Kandahar police chief,

General Abdul Raziq and the provincial intelligence chief, Abdul Momin, were also killed. Mr Inghar was 64 and a father of six children. According to Reporters Without Borders, 14 journalists and one media worker have been killed in Afghanistan in the year up to 30 November 2018. The journalists’ federation believes the figure is much higher than reported by foreign press.

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Brexit mystery deepens

AS WE go to press just ahead of a vote in Parliament on the Withdrawal Agreement, it’s becoming impossible to predict what will happen next with Brexit. Will there be a rapidly-concluded deal, a catastrophic “no deal”, the prospect of a Norway Plus arrangement for the UK or even a possible second referendum on whether to stay in the EU?

In view of this, it’s unwise to give advice in print that will almost certainly be out of date, so we direct you to our latest guides online at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1811brex.html for our many members who are EU nationals in the UK and www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1811brit.html for the many UK nationals in the EU who are in the NUJ. Watch for up-

dates online. Meanwhile, EU nationals in the UK are advised to register with their embassies for updates on what to do in case of Brexit.

To summarise: applications for the EU Settlement Scheme for EU nationals to register to stay in the UK after Brexit (“settled status”) will open on 30 March 2019. EU nationals should start gathering up any proof of their stay and economic activity in the UK to “evidence their residence” for their application. UK Prime Minister Theresa May has already pledged to EU nationals, “your rights will be protected, even in the event of no deal”.

Some EU countries with restrictions on being a dual national are making moves to relax these for UK nationals wishing to naturalise,

in some cases for a limited period after Brexit. Stef Blok, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, recently pledged that even in the event of No Deal, his government “will ensure a decent solution to British citizens staying in our country after 30 March 2019... we won’t let these people down” (the *Freelance*’s own translation). UK nationals in the Netherlands will not need to apply for permanent residence post-Brexit: they will be contacted by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service and “invited” to apply.

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An EU flag at a London “People’s Vote” march in June. Image © Matt Salusbury