FEAST
fueled by IDLance

Funnel flows

8 Sample Funnels to Steal, Tweak, and Make Your Own



Funnel 1: The Lead Magnet Funnel

Why it works: This funnel gives someone a reason to go from casually checking you out to actually engaging with your work. A useful, niche-specific resource lets you show off what you know while solving a small problem for them. From there, a well-placed CTA gives them an easy path to get in touch if they need more than your handy-dandy PDF can provide.

Set yourself up for success: Make sure your resource is directly connected to the kind of work you want to be hired for. Keep it useful and specific, make it easy to find on your website, and don't forget that CTA!

Someone finds you on LinkedIn and checks out your profile.
Your profile is active, and your Featured section includes 1–3 strong posts. At least one gives them a reason to click through to your website.

They visit your website and discover a free resource you made for your ideal client: "The New Nurse Onboarding Checklist."
Because you specialize in healthcare onboarding, you've created a practical guide for hospital L&D teams. It's totally free and easy to access.

They download the resource and find a CTA at the end: "Want to see how I could help your team do this? Let's talk."
After giving them something genuinely useful, you give them an easy next step if they need more help. You've also included a Calendly link! Great job!

They click the link and book a discovery call.
Now you've gone from someone they happened to find on LinkedIn to someone they're actually talking to about their problem.

The discovery call goes great, and they decide to work with you!
You've won them over with your big brain and sparkling personality!

Funnel 2: The Referral Funnel

Why it works: Referrals come with trust already baked in. Instead of starting at the tippy top of your funnel, a recommendation from someone they trust can drop a potential client somewhere in the middle. But that doesn't mean the rest of your funnel gets the day off! They're probably still going to look you up, check out your work, and decide for themselves whether you seem like the right fit.

Set yourself up for success: Give that warm lead plenty of reasons to keep moving. Make sure your LinkedIn profile clearly reflects what you do, feature work or case studies that back it up, and give curious prospects an obvious next step. The referral might get your name in the room, but the rest of your funnel helps confirm that the person who recommended you wasn't full of crap.

A potential client gets your name from someone they trust.
A former client recommends you for an onboarding project, giving you an immediate credibility boost before the prospect knows anything else about you.

They look you up to see if the recommendation checks out.
Your LinkedIn profile confirms that healthcare onboarding really is your thing and points them toward a relevant case study.

They dig into the case study and see a problem that looks a lot like theirs.
Now they're not just taking your past client's word for it. They can see how you approached similar work and what you actually brought to the project.

The case study gives them an obvious next step.
A CTA like "Working through an onboarding challenge of your own? Let's talk." sends them to a short inquiry form.

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They tell you a little about what they're working on.
You learn enough about the project to know it could be a fit and invite them to a discovery call.

The referral gets you in the door. Your funnel does the rest!
They came in with borrowed trust, but your work, positioning, and easy next steps helped turn that recommendation into a real opportunity.

Funnel 3: The LinkedIn Content Funnel

Why it works: Remember all that niche work we made you agonize over earlier? Here's where it starts earning its keep! When you know who you want to work with and what kinds of problems you want to solve, you can create content that speaks directly to those people instead of yelling thoughts into the void. A specific CTA can then turn that little flicker of recognition into an actual conversation.

Set yourself up for success: Get specific! Write about the problems, situations, and questions your ideal clients actually encounter. And don't be afraid to keep the convo going!

You write a LinkedIn post aimed squarely at your niche.
You share a useful perspective on a problem your ideal clients actually deal with, like making healthcare onboarding more effective.

You end the post with a question that gets people talking.
Instead of pitching your services, you invite people in your niche to share their own experiences or challenges.

Someone from your target audience joins the conversation.
An L&D professional at a hospital comments on an onboarding problem their team is struggling with. You respond publicly, then send a friendly DM offering to share a few ideas based on similar work you've done.

The conversation uncovers a real project need.
You learn they're reworking their onboarding program, so you suggest a quick call and send your Calendly link.

The call goes really well, and they decide to bring you aboard!
And that's how one useful LinkedIn conversation turned into dollar bills.

Funnel 4: The Trojan Horse Funnel

Why it works: Sometimes, you've gotta go find the client yourself! The Trojan Horse Funnel starts with cold outreach, but instead of leading with a giant sales pitch, you lead with something interesting enough that they actually *want* to click.

The trick is making the experience feel like it was created for them. Which it is. We're talking about a short, fun sample that gets their attention, shows off what you can do, and leads them somewhere much more tailored to their company. By the time they hit the actual sales pitch, they've already spent a few minutes experiencing your work.

Set yourself up for success: Personalization is doing a LOT of the heavy lifting here. Research the company and build something specific enough that it couldn't have been sent to 500 random people. This funnel takes more work per prospect, so save it for companies you'd REALLY love to work with.

You identify a company you'd genuinely love to work with.
You do your homework and spot a real learning or performance challenge that your services could potentially help solve at a place you'd love to work with.

You reach out to a few relevant people at the company.
Instead of dropping a giant sales pitch in their inbox, you send a short, personalized message that gives them a reason to get curious and click.

They click through to a tiny sample you made just for them.
You build a custom 7taps course for them that's well-made, funny, or surprising enough to keep them tapping while also showing off what you can do.

The final card reveals why you actually made the thing.
Now that you've got their attention, a CTA sends them to a landing page created specifically for their company.

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They land on a page that connects the dots.
The page explains what you noticed, how you could help, and why your services might be relevant to what's happening in their world.

They decide it's worth a conversation.
A clear CTA and Calendly link makes it easy to choose a time on your calendar and keep things moving.

The call goes great, and you land the gig!
Your weird little Trojan horse has successfully breached the gates! HUZZAH!

Funnel 5: The Conference Networking Funnel

Why it works: In-person events give you something the internet can't quite replicate: a real human interaction right out of the gate! Someone gets to talk to you, get a feel for your personality, and hopefully remember you as more than “instructional designer #847.”

But conferences are also nuts. People meet approximately nine billion humans, collect a pile of business cards, fly home exhausted, and forget half of what happened. And the germs. So many germs. This funnel gives a good convo somewhere to go *after* the conference is over.

Set yourself up for success: Don't make your business card the end of the road. Give people an easy, memorable way to learn a little more about you once they have time to actually pay attention. Keep everything mobile-friendly, since there's a very good chance they'll scan your QR code while standing in a convention center hallway.

You meet someone at a conference and hit it off.
During the conversation, you learn that their company is struggling with onboarding and mention that it happens to be one of your specialties.

They leave with your business card and a reason to scan the QR code.
Instead of a mysterious naked QR code, yours tells them exactly what they'll get: “So...what the heck do I do? Scan me to find out!”

They scan it later and get a quick reintroduction to you.
A short, mobile-friendly video reminds them who you are, what you do, and the kinds of problems you help solve. Plus, it shows off your charm and wit!

The video sends them to your portfolio to see more.
The first projects they find reinforce what they've already heard: this person works on problems like mine.

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Your portfolio gives them an easy way to keep the conversation going.
A CTA like “Working on something similar? Let's talk!” sends them straight to your calendar via a Calendly link.

They book a discovery call.
No digging around for that business card or trying to remember your last name three weeks later! They got ya on lock!

You guys hit it off on the call, and you get the job!
It really makes that terrible conference food allllllll worth it. Almost. Kinda.

Funnel 6: The Newsletter Nurture Funnel

Why it works: Timing is a huge part of freelancing. Someone can think you're brilliant and still have absolutely nothing to hire you for right now. A newsletter gives interested people a reason to stay in your orbit so that when a problem *does* pop up, you're already hanging around in their inbox.

This funnel also lets one piece of content lead naturally into another. A useful LinkedIn article earns their attention, your newsletter gives them a reason to stick around, and eventually the right topic at the right time can turn a longtime reader into an actual conversation.

Set yourself up for success: Give your newsletter a clear focus and a reason to subscribe. Make your opt-in process simple, tell people what they're signing up to receive, and send useful stuff on a schedule you can realistically maintain. Most importantly, don't judge this funnel by how many people immediately book a call. This one's playing the long game.

Someone discovers a LinkedIn article you wrote for your niche.
The article tackles a real customer education problem and gives them a useful taste of how you think. Something like, “How to Tell If You Have a Training Problem or a Product Problem.”

They like what they read and subscribe to your newsletter.
A CTA at the bottom sends them to a simple opt-in page that tells them what they'll get and how often you'll show up in their inbox.

Your Thank You page gives them an immediate way to get in touch.
A quick welcome video introduces you and includes a link to book a call if they need help right now. They don't click it. That's okay!

You keep showing up in their inbox.
They read some issues, skim others, and completely ignore at least one. Rude.
But over time, they're getting familiar with you and your expertise.

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Then one issue lands at exactly the right time.
You write something brilliant about handling customer education for a major product update just as their company is preparing for one of its own.

This time, your CTA hits differently.
You invite readers dealing with that exact problem to hit “Reply” and tell you what they're working through. You offer a space to vent and brainstorm...no pitch!

They reply, and suddenly you're talking about a real project.
After a little back-and-forth about what their team needs, you suggest continuing the conversation on a quick call. They book using the Calendly link in your email footer.

Five newsletters later, the timing is finally right.
The conversation goes well, and your long-game funnel turns into a new client.

Funnel 7: The Past Client Funnel

Why it works: Past clients already know you, trust you, and know what it's like to work with you. That means you don't have to spend nearly as much time proving yourself before you can talk about working together again. Sometimes, getting back on their radar is as simple as giving them a timely reason to think about you.

Set yourself up for success: Don't wait until you're desperate for work to remember your past clients exist. Keep track of people you've enjoyed working with and look for natural reasons to reconnect. A seasonal offer works best when the timing actually makes sense for the client and the services solve a specific problem!

You package some of your existing services around a timely need.
For Q4, that might be “The End-of-Year Learning Cleanup”: course updates, accessibility fixes, content cleanup, and other lingering training odds and ends. Cute!

You give the offer a simple home of its own.
A landing page explains what the package includes, who it’s for, and gives interested clients an easy way to start a conversation.

A past client gets a friendly email from you about it.
You loved working together, so you send the package their way in case anything has been lingering on their year-end to-do list.

They click through and realize the timing is kinda perfect.
They’ve got two outdated courses and a pile of accessibility fixes. Better yet, they already know you and trust your work. The CTA makes it easy to grab a time on your calendar and chat about what they need.

An old client becomes a new client all over again!
No starting from scratch required. One timely reason to reconnect just turned into another project. And just in time for some holiday spending!

Funnel 8: The IDLance Community Funnel

Why it works: Sometimes the easiest way to become known for something is to actually show people you know your stuff! Teaching, presenting, and participating in an industry community lets people experience your expertise before they ever need to hire you.

The payoff isn't always immediate. Someone might attend your session, see your name around the community afterward, and not need what you do until months later. But now, when that particular problem appears, there's a pretty good chance your name comes with it.

Set yourself up for success: Pick a topic that's closely connected to the kind of work you actually want to get hired for. A webinar can get you visibility, but it's way more valuable when it helps cement a specific association in people's brains. Then make sure there's an easy way for someone who likes what they hear to stay connected with you afterward.

You pitch a webinar connected to the work you want more of.
If accessibility is your thing, you might lead an IDLance community session like "Accessibility for Beginners: The CLEAR Framework for Freelancers." We made up that framework. Don't bother Googling it. Hopefully it's not something real and weird.

You teach something super helpful to the community.
Instead of spending an hour selling yourself, you show people how you think and start becoming "Oh yeah! The accessibility person" in our Slack!

Attendees leave with an easy way to keep up with you.
IDLance gives every speaker their own landing page where they can share links of their choosing, like their LinkedIn, website, portfolio, newsletter, or a resource from the session. Point attendees there at the end so they know exactly where to find you after the webinar.

One attendee connects with you on LinkedIn.
They don't need accessibility help right now, but they keep seeing your name and occasionally bumping into your posts over the next few months.

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Then a project comes along, and they could use another set of hands.
They land a big accessibility remediation project, realize it's more than they can comfortably handle alone, and remember your webinar.

They dig up your information and reach out.
Three months after your presentation, you get a message asking if you'd be interested in subcontracting on the project.

Your reputation as "the accessibility person" pays off.
You hop on a call, talk through the project, and turn one webinar from months ago into paid work! Ok, influencer!

Wanna lead an IDLance Community Event?

We're pretty much booked for 2026, but click here to submit your idea for early 2027.

Also, this is a CTA! Everything's coming together!

