

What Peloton Advantage Expects from Freelance Medical Writers

FROM THE 2008 FREELANCE WORKSHOP

By Janet Manfre

Michael J. McLaughlin, MD, Chief Scientific Officer at Peloton Advantage, provided an overview of his organization's approach to working with freelance medical writers in this informative presentation. Peloton Advantage is a medical communications company based in Parsippany, N.J. whose main focus is on providing strategic publication planning services to pharmaceutical clients. A small proportion of the business is dedicated to the development of content for medical programs.

How Peloton Works with Freelances

McLaughlin addressed the topic of expectations in the context of how Peloton helps freelance writers help the organization. The company aims to assist writers so they can deliver work that meets the company's high standards for quality.

Peloton screens new writers by first reviewing the writer's background and credentials, writing experience, and therapeutic area experience relative to the current company needs. If these seem appropriate the next step is a phone interview, after which the writer is asked to provide writing samples.

When starting a project, the team has a kick-off telephone call, during which the staff provides the writer with a full download of information about the project, and review project timelines as well as company processes. The writer should be aware of the steps that take place after he/she submits the work, such as fact-checking, and scientific and editorial reviews.

Specific Expectations

Peloton expects freelance writers to treat the company as Peloton treats its own clients. This includes being honest regarding experience with the project type and the therapeutic area, demonstrating a commitment to producing quality work, even when juggling multiple projects or clients, meeting deadlines and maintaining good communication. It is particularly important to communicate problems with timelines as soon as they become apparent.

In terms of the writing, the organization expects freelances to:

- Adhere to the project plan and outline
 - Raise questions when there are problems with the plan
- Use AMA style and scientific language
- Demonstrate an organized flow
- Maintain consistency

- Submit original work
- Demonstrate attention to detail
- Proofread all work before submission.

Assessing Writer Performance

Peloton has implemented a system to objectively assess the performance of freelance writers. At the conclusion of a project, the internal team meets to answer a series of questions regarding the services provided by the freelance. These include an assessment of the writer's overall performance and preparedness to complete the project, as well as how well the writer followed the company's procedures and an overall assessment of the work that was delivered. By applying a numeric scoring system, the team can document a fair assessment of the writer's work that can be used when considering the writer for future assignments.

A key to Peloton's most successful and mutually advantageous relationships with freelances has been the promotion of a sense of working together to overcome challenges. Peloton's best freelance writers are those that truly act as an extension of the internal team.

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