

DELAWRITER

The quarterly newsletter of AMWA-DVC

Delawriter Editors

Summer Edition, June 2017

Summertime, and livin' is easy.....

How to Get the Clients You Deserve

By Monica Nicosia

Developing a solid client base is a critical challenge faced by freelancers. Lori De Milto, MJ, Writer for Rent LLC, shared her successful approach during her talk, "The Easiest, Most Effective Ways to Get the Clients You Deserve" at the AMWA-Delaware Valley Chapter 15th Annual Freelance Workshop, held March 18, 2017, in King of Prussia, PA. De Milto discussed the following eight actions:

- Develop the freelance success mindset
- Choose the right specialty
- Choose the right prospects
- Go after your prospects
- Develop a strong online presence
- Network effectively and strategically
- Follow up consistently
- Be realistic

"You have to be determined to succeed and willing to put in the work that it takes," she said. Freelancers also should "listen more and talk less" to learn about their clients' needs and determine how to help them meet those needs.

Specializing beyond "just medical writing or editing" helps narrow down the types of clients to seek out. De Milto advised starting with a list of 150 to 200 prospects, with names of contacts and email addresses culled from resources including the AMWA member directory, directories from other professional organizations, leading company lists, and LinkedIn.

According to De Milto, if done right, direct e-mail is a very effective way to reach potential clients. She emphasized the importance of researching a prospect's needs before writing a compelling, short e-mail that includes an enticing subject line and that is (at most) 4 to 6 sentences.

"Make it personal, make it easy for the prospect to learn more about you, and encourage the prospect to connect with you," she said. If you don't get a response, a critical step is to follow-up with a short polite email 1 to 2 weeks after the original email.

To develop a strong online presence, De Milto recommended a three-pronged approach using LinkedIn, the AMWA Freelance Directory, and a professional website. The LinkedIn profile should include a professional photo, a strong headline and summary, a clear call to action, contact information, and a link to the website and/or work samples. De Milto said "text should be persuasive, interesting, and conversational. It's marketing, not medical writing." She also pointed out that much of the content from LinkedIn can be repurposed for one's AMWA Freelance Directory listing and website.

Referrals are a powerful way to get new clients, De Milto said, and to get referrals, freelancers must put a network in place and continuously build it. Volunteering for a professional association like AMWA is an excellent way to build referrals. To network strategically, she recommended focusing on people with large

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QUICK NOTES

June Dinner Presentation, Networking, and Business Meeting

Join us on **Wednesday, June 21st** for a dinner presentation at the elegant **Sandy Run Country Club** in Oreland, PA.

Deborah Anderson will present on content assessments and learner needs evaluations. She will

provide guidance on the importance of instructional design.

DVC's outgoing president, **Michelle Dalton** will update us on what's new at AMWA National.

Come meet DVC's new president and president-elect and honor the volunteers who make AMWA-DVC possible. [Register here!](#)

networks who do similar or complimentary work.

She pointed out that a big mistake is not following up with potential prospects. To stay in touch with potential clients and colleagues, she suggested reaching out with polite, professional, low-key messages (eg, comment on relevant news; provide useful resources; offer congratulations for promotions).

Finally, De Milto said freelancers need to be realistic because "most marketing is like planting seeds and waiting for them to grow. It takes time. Don't wait to market until you are desperate for work."

Monica Nicosia, PhD, is a freelance medical writer at Nicosia Medical Writer LLC, Bryn Mawr, PA.

The Business of Freelancing

By Helen Fosam

In a nutshell, the excellent presentation by Alisa Bonsignore, ClarifyingComplexIdeas.com on "The Business of Freelancing: Lessons Learned from a Decade of Independence" at the AMWA-Delaware Valley Chapter Freelance Workshop on March 18, 2017, in King of Prussia, PA, was packed with information and sprinkled with just the right amount of humor. Bonsignore covered three key areas for freelancing and reminded the audience that "a lot of common sense must apply."

Conduct a **business needs assessment**, Bonsignore advised. Identifying financial needs and goals depends on several variables, including cost of living, desired earning from billable projects, and preferred hours worked, while making allowances for taxes, insurance, and even vacation. Bonsignore's illustration with a simple spread sheet demonstrated how we can all set the agenda and take charge of project estimates, emphasizing that everything is open to negotiation, including project cost, working on-site or off-site, and project deadline. Regarding the latter, introducing a "rush fee" can help to limit unreasonable client expectations and allow some level of control of the project. Practice makes perfect, and Bonsignore advised us all to practice before we negotiate, especially with an existing client, as opposed to a new client. However, Bonsignore cautioned that it is important to know your market and the value you bring to the table for your client.

How to distinguish yourself from the competition focused on maintaining a **professional look** -- physical appearance, as well as on-line and off-line presence. Some of Bonsignore's recommendations for maintaining a positive professional look as a freelance writer or editor included the following: Be careful what you post online, watch for careless spelling and grammatical errors, maintain a professional website and domain name, seek recommendations from past clients, and get involved with professional organizations.

Bonsignore focused her last key message on how we must **learn from our mistakes** to grow and improve our businesses. She identified several mistakes that most of us have made, unknowingly or sometimes out of habit, that can hurt our business. Bonsignore advises the following:

1. Listen attentively-to be clear about the clients' request and needs.
2. Stop apologizing-especially if unable to meet a deadline that is outside your control
3. Never say "yes" to a project if you really mean "no"
4. Let a client phone call go to voicemail. Call back after listening to the message and after collecting your thoughts or facts
5. Better to bill by project than hourly, especially for the experienced writer or editor
6. Don't work or think alone-network, support and collaborate with colleagues to share experiences, problems, advice.

Additional common-sense ideas included limiting communication with a client to one key contact person, streamlining communication and avoiding confusion, and clarifying upfront that additional revisions beyond the number specified in the agreement will incur an hourly fee. The result of a business approach to freelancing is a professional image and improved work/life balance.

Helen Fosam, PhD, is a freelance medical writer and owner of The Edge Medical Writing, LLC. She focuses on CME needs assessments, manuscript writing and pharmaceutical product training materials.

What Do We Really Know About Learning?

By Kathy Molnar Kimber

Ever wonder why you can feel totally saturated on a subject? Dr. Brian McGowan, PhD, FACEHP, ArcheMedX, presented that our ability to learn a topic and move it from working memory into long-term memory acts like an old-fashioned hourglass. McGowan gave a thought-provoking and entertaining presentation at this year's AMWA-Delaware Valley Chapter Freelance Conference Workshop on March 18, 2017, in King of Prussia, PA. It provided a distinct perspective on the science of learning, medical writing, and its ultimate goals: support learning of often complex concepts and motivate recipients to change behavior.

2017 AMWA Medical Writing & Communication Conference

AMWA's Annual Conference, to be held November 1-4, 2017, in Orlando, FL, will be packed with educational and networking opportunities. Each day has networking events, plentiful and diverse educational offerings, and award-winning speakers. Take a look at what [this year's conference](#) has to offer, and book early!

Volunteering at AMWA-DVC

AMWA-DVC is an all volunteer organization whose mission is the promotion of medical communication to members and the community. *Interested in presenting a session? Paying it forward? Helping out with an event?* Please contact our [Volunteer Coordinator](#).

Join the DELAWRITER

The DELAWRITER needs editors and contributing authors for the quarterly publication. *Have an idea for an article? Haven't used that byline recently? Like to edit and improve other's work?* If so, please contact the [editorial team](#).

This "story" intersects three fields: memory science, process of learning, and behavioral impact. Our understanding of these three fields and implementation influence the ability of our documents and presentations to teach scientists, clinicians, other healthcare professionals, and sales personnel in the scientific and medical fields.

For example, the cognitive load theory of memory proposes that our ability to learn a subject is dependent on three related relationships of our working memory for a given subject: intrinsic load, extraneous load, and germane load.

- **Intrinsic load:** The complexity of the knowledge for the intended audience influences their ability to learn it. Can the audience relate the new knowledge to their current knowledge? How big of a stretch is the new information? The same technical information provided to specialists in the field may be a review, whereas it could be overwhelming to new students, caregivers, and patients.
- **Extraneous load theory:** The environment and presentation should support the task of learning rather than distract the audience. Are the concepts presented in a well-organized, clear manner? Do the materials relate the new information to the audience's current knowledge? Does the audience participate throughout the module? Does the module provide clues to important conclusions? Does it provide well-defined action steps?
- **Germane load:** The amount of desire that an individual feels toward learning and using the information affects the individual's ability to remember it. How motivated is the audience to learn the information?

How relevant is it to the audience?

Medical writers mostly affect the extraneous load of the content. We gear the content to a specific audience—such as specialists, primary care physicians, nurses, general public, and patients and their caregivers. We also use the style of writing that the audience is accustomed to reading, seeing, or hearing.

Medical writers and designers can affect the ability of the audience to absorb the information by providing an appropriate instructional design, providing a conducive learning environment, structuring the new information in bite-sized pieces, and making the presentation of the content memorable.

McGowan also discussed four methods that help people retain information and move it into the long-term memory. His findings are based on the interviews from 300 clinicians and summarized their perceived methods of learning. First, note taking helped the clinicians learn. The medium for notes—notebooks, post-its, pads—varied with the individual clinician. The fourth method included "nudges," which were phrases that the next item was important to remember.

Kathy Molnar Kimber, PhD is an independent medical writer (KMK Consulting Services, Kimnar Group, LLC). She specializes in CME, scientific and clinical manuscripts, and reviews.

Brian Bass To Receive the Swanberg Award

Congratulations to Brian Bass, MWC, who will be awarded the Swanberg Distinguished Service Award at [AMWA Medical Writing and Communication Conference](#) in Orlando, FL, (November 1 to 4, 2017). The Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award is named in honor of the physician who founded AMWA. The award is presented to an active member of AMWA who has made distinguished contributions to medical communication or rendered unusual and distinguished services to the medical profession.

Bass has contributed to the advancement of our profession on many fronts, particularly AMWA National and our own Delaware Valley Chapter for decades. Over a 30-year period, he helped educate others about medical writing, and helped improve the reputation of the profession—both inside and outside of AMWA. He wrote several books on medical writing with his collaborator, Cyndy Kryder, MS. His AMWA involvement ranged from developing and presenting 3 credit workshops and numerous open sessions at many National and AMWA-DVC conferences, to chair of the Princeton Conference and annual conference, President of AMWA-DVC, and AMWA National and marketing and promotion of the conferences and the Medical Writing Certification. Those of us in DVC offer a heartfelt congratulations! Although Bass has recently moved to Ft. Myers, FL, his dedication and contributions to AMWA-DVC will always be remembered.

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