

DELAWRITER

The quarterly newsletter of AMWA-DVC

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Spring 2014

Registration for the 18th Annual Princeton Conference Now Open

Registration for the 18th Annual Princeton Conference, to be held on April 26th is now open. The conference will be held at a new location this year -- the [Princeton Marriott](#) at Forrestal Conference Center, 100 College Road East, off Route 1 near Princeton. The full-day program runs from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, with workshops beginning promptly at 9:00 am.

This year's schedule includes four credit workshops and two non-credit workshops. The credit workshops are:

- **Punctuation for Clarity and Style** (ES/G) presented by Susan Aiello, DVM, ELS
- **Writing the Final Report of A Clinical Trial** (RR/PH) presented by Lawrence E. Liberti, MSC, RPh, RAC
- **Basics of Molecular Biology** (SM/EW/PH/SG) presented by Dominic De Bellis, PhD
- **Writing the Investigator Brochure** (RR/PH) presented by Jane Stephenson, PhD, MBA

The non-credit, how-to workshops are:

- **How to Write a Safety Narrative** presented by Sara Ewing, BSN, RN
- **How To Use RefMan Reference Management Software - Part 2: Downloading a Library From PubMed and Creating Reference Output Styles** presented by Don Fallon, ELS, and Courtney Breuel, ELS

The registration deadline for credit courses is Friday, March 28th, 2014. *Register early, as credit workshops are limited to 30 people. There is no deadline for How-To Sessions.*

The Princeton Conference brochure and registration form, including the registration fees, are available [online](#).

Coming Next Month: The 12th Annual

Freelance Conference

Expect to see a few changes at this year's Freelance Conference, promise conference co-chairs Dawn Salamon and Tracy Bunting-Early, PhD. Salamon and Bunting-Early have confirmed several outside experts, including Donna Serdula, who promises to inspire and inform even the most experienced and successful freelancers on how to maximize a LinkedIn profile.

This year's theme is Freelancing and Beyond. While the Freelance Conference will continue to offer insights on what it takes to put together a successful freelance business, AMWA-DVC has listened to feedback and is including more about moving beyond the basics ... like further building your business, improving your work-life balance, and reaching for more in your career.

"We wanted to re-engage our colleagues by providing both outside expertise on topics that are cutting-edge, and also by supporting the collaboration we have among peers," Salamon says. This year's meeting will feature a panel of legal experts to discuss contracts and agreements and a session on branding and marketing. To encourage the development of peer groups, there will be a panel presentation with veteran writers and a new free-form format added to some of the roundtables.

"We've put a lot of effort into building an agenda that has exceptional value," Bunting-Early says. "It's a bargain when compared with national creative and small business conferences that charge anywhere from \$200 to \$600 a day for presentations on similar topics." This year's agenda includes:

- **Freelancing and Beyond: Veteran Writers Panel**
- **Overview of the Business of Freelancing**
- **Ask the Experts: Contracts and Agreements**
 - Scott Fegley, Esq., The Fegley Law Firm
 - Susan Davis, National Writers Union
- **Brand Like a Pro**
- **Maximizing Your LinkedIn Presence**
 - Donna Serdula, Author of *LinkedIn Makeover*
- **Discover Google+, Authorship, and SEO**
 - Beth Browning, DiscoverYourCustomers.com
- **Roundtable Discussions**

The Freelance Conference is scheduled for Saturday, March 22nd, 2014 from 8:00 am to 4:45 pm at the [Philadelphia Airport Hilton](#). Online [registration](#) is now open.

The Many Benefits Gained by Volunteering

by Michelle Dalton, ELS

When I decided to launch my own company in 2006 and become a full-time freelance medical writer, I did so with some trepidation. My initial set of clients was geographically far-flung, and I worried about how I was going to stay fresh and updated on my skill set when I would be working by myself in my office with no one down the hall to bounce ideas off of or to ask about phrasing preferences. As a member of AMWA, I knew I could attend chapter meetings and the annual conference offered some terrific courses, but was that going to be enough? I missed the interaction of working with like-minded people who had similar skill sets.

So I went to my very first Freelance Workshop and quickly realized I'm not the only one. The majority of attendees were in my same situation. Some of the people I met that day have become my go-to sounding board about numerous aspects of medical writing, business planning, and even long-term financial planning. But that wasn't enough.

I quickly volunteered to help with the following year's Freelance Conference, and then other DVC and national activities. I've moderated panels, been on the podium at the national conference, led roundtable discussions, written articles for the Delawriter (and currently serve as its co-editor), photocopied handouts and helped with registration, and developed dinner meeting agendas, to name just a few volunteer activities. And I have been rewarded with camaraderie, friendships, mentors, and sounding boards.

The most rewarding aspect of volunteering is working with like-minded people who only want to advance the entire field of medical communication. Becoming a volunteer was also a way to help build my reputation, increase my potential referral base, and expand my knowledge of people to whom I could refer my own clients. I've never regretted the decision to participate and volunteer as often as I can.

If you're passionate about a topic (e.g., grammar, instructional design, time management, or regulatory issues) or just want to give back in a more subtle way (check people in at a meeting and get to know your fellow DVCers!), AMWA-DVC is a great place to start. The organization is always looking for volunteers, and with the Freelance Workshop, Princeton Conference, and the dinner meetings, we are always on the lookout for more people who are interested in sharing their knowledge.

Trust me... there are members out there who want to learn from you!

Michelle Dalton, ELS, is founder of Dalton & Associates (Reading, PA), a medical writing and editing company that specializes in ophthalmology and dermatology.

Volunteer with AMWA-DVC

Volunteering with AMWA-DVC is a great way to build your network and develop your career. We have an immediate need for a webinar coordinator. We also have volunteer opportunities available in programs, newsletter, website, membership, and more. Most volunteer tasks take a few hours a month or less.

For more information on volunteer opportunities:

- Contact Volunteer Coordinator Kira Belkin at volunteer@amwa-dvc.org
- Visit the AMWA-DVC volunteer [web page](#)

AMWA President Brian Bass Launches Blog

His hope is for better communication from the executive board to its membership.

AMWA-DVC long-time member and newly elected AMWA President Brian Bass, president of Bass Global Inc. (Robbinsville, NJ), has launched an AMWA blog, aptly entitled "[From the President's Desk](#)," to "communicate directly with you about things happening at AMWA that you might not know about, and for me to get feedback from you regarding these posts."

Among the goals of the blog -- which Bass hopes will be published "a couple of times a month" -- is to "help humanize AMWA for you," he said. "We are a volunteer organization. Why do we do it? Because we believe in AMWA and are committed to guiding AMWA forward so it remains the leading professional organization for medical communicators."

As president, Bass is responsible for writing an article in the quarterly *AMWA Journal*, but said that wasn't enough. "I have heard that members want more communication, to know what's happening while things are in the works rather than after they're done," he said. "I also want members to know what a hoot it is to serve at the national level, and how much great work gets done over the course of the year."

Pats on the back for jobs well done are always welcomed, but Bass is also looking for objective critiques about things that may not go as well as they should in the organization. Fresh on the heels of the January Executive Committee (EC) meeting, Bass said the EC members are "brainstorming together to figure out how their committees can collaborate" to bring more benefits to members. They will also initiate a half-day orientation program for new EC members to help ensure a smooth and productive transition.

While he's uncertain where the next blog posting musing will take him, he does encourage any AMWA member to contact him directly. "Please send your thoughts, comments, suggestions, and ideas regarding my posts to me at

president@amwa.org" he said. "The blog is really amorphous, and like most things with me, I'll be inventing it as I go along."

How AMWA Helped My Career: Engineering My Luck Through AMWA

by Beth Pulaski, PhD

Given the current economic environment, reviving my career after an 8-year hiatus (or rather retirement, which is how I like to refer to my time off) should have been an impossible task. During these past 3 years I have had to make a lot of choices and strategic moves. Money was so excruciatingly tight that every dollar spent had to count. (Sound familiar?)

I opened a business, which meant licensing fees...

I went back to school, which was definitely not cheap...

Then, I joined AMWA, which I have to say has given me the best return on my money and time by far! (Apologies if I sound so pragmatic.)

AMWA has provided me:

- Social support
- Business relationships
- Educational opportunities
- Open doors

So how did this all begin?

In February 2010, I landed an opportunity to write a review article for a highly respected ovarian cancer researcher. But like most first assignments, it was very awkward. Did I know anything about contracts? No. In fact, I ended up not getting paid, but back then I was just grateful for the experience. Confidence was a low commodity.

All I kept hearing inside was: "Who is ever going to hire someone who hasn't worked in over 8 years?" Then I started hearing from recruiters: "You have no experience" (which still stings my ears every day, even now).

Thanks to my first AMWA meeting, I made a connection with a medical communications firm and volunteered to work with them for a few months. Again, I wasn't getting paid, but at least I was gaining experience!

It's now 2 years later and I am working full-time for a major pharmaceutical company and as an adjunct professor during the summer semester. Both of these opportunities were facilitated by AMWA connections.

AMWA provided the doors. Staying open, friendly, and active, which is not that difficult to do in the Delaware Valley Chapter,

is what actually opened those doors. Which is why I like to say, "I have engineered my luck through AMWA."

Beth Pulaski, PhD, is the owner of a scientific consulting firm, One Who Serves, LLC, and Adjunct Professor of scientific writing at Thomas Jefferson University.

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