

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

*The Nuts and Bolts of Starting
(and Maintaining)
Your Freelance Writing Business*

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Eleanor Mayfield, ELS



"FREELANCING 101"

**Targeted level of
experience:
New to the Field
(less than 3 years)**

2015 AMWA Salary Survey DEGREE FIELDS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Science	50%	
Medicine	5%	59%
Pharmacy	4%	
English	9%	
Journalism	4%	
Medical Writing	4%	25%
Communications	4%	
Liberal Arts	4%	
"Other"		16%

MY BACKGROUND

- ❖ B.A. in journalism, 5 years as a newspaper reporter and editor
- ❖ 7 years in health-care media relations
- ❖ Full-time freelance medical writer/editor since 1989 in 3 different states
- ❖ Certified Editor in the Life Sciences
- ❖ Certificate in Medical Writing & Editing, University of Chicago Graham School

BENEFITS OF A FULL-TIME JOB

- ❖ Regular paycheck?
- ❖ Regular work hours?
- ❖ Vacation and sick days?
- ❖ Health insurance?
- ❖ Retirement plan?

OTHER "BENEFITS" OF A CORPORATE JOB

- ❖ Job insecurity
- ❖ Office politics
- ❖ Poor business planning
- ❖ Competition
- ❖ Outsourcing

BENEFITS OF FREELANCING

- ❖ Variety in your workload
- ❖ Creative challenges
- ❖ Freedom to choose your projects
- ❖ More control over your career/life
- ❖ Better work/life balance?

HAZARDS OF FREELANCING

- ❖ No regular paycheck
- ❖ No vacation pay or sick days
- ❖ Retirement benefits??
- ❖ Next job??

\$\$\$ CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ “Plan financially as if you are not going to be working and getting paid for 3–5 years”
- ❖ “Have at least 6 months’ worth of salary saved”

\$\$\$ CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ Having a financial cushion when you start freelancing is a plus
- ❖ Will you receive any money from your current job when you leave?
- ❖ Do you have any other sources of income?

HEALTH INSURANCE

- ❖ Can you get coverage under someone else’s plan?
- ❖ Can you take your current coverage with you when you leave your job? (COBRA)
- ❖ Affordable Care Act health insurance exchanges (HealthCare.gov)

BUSINESS INSURANCE

- ❖ Two types to consider:
 - General liability (“slip and fall”)
 - Protects against lawsuits for personal injury or property damage
 - Professional liability (“errors and omissions”)
 - Protects against lawsuits for faulty performance of professional services

FORMS OF BUSINESS ORGANIZATION

- ❖ Sole proprietorship (“Schedule C”)
- ❖ Limited liability company
- ❖ S corporation
- ❖ Incorporation

IRS Small Business and Self-Employed Tax Center
<http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed>

TAXES

- ❖ As a small business or self-employed individual, you pay your own taxes
 - Income tax
 - Self-employment tax (FICA/social security)
- ❖ Tax rates and methods of payment vary depending on the form of business organization you choose
- ❖ Seek advice from an accountant

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WHAT KINDS OF WORK DO YOU LIKE/WANT TO DO? (What Do You Have Experience Doing?)

- ❖ Regulatory writing
- ❖ Manuscript writing
- ❖ Preparing presentations
- ❖ Training programs/continuing education
- ❖ Editing
- ❖ Writing for patients/lay audiences

WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL WORK ENVIRONMENT?

- ❖ In a co-located group
- ❖ In a “virtual group” or alone

YOUR NEW WORKPLACE

- ❖ Where will you work?
 - Home office?
 - Rented office space?
 - Dedicated space
 - Deductible business expense

YOUR NEW WORKPLACE

- ❖ Office equipment and supplies
 - Broadband Internet connection
 - Cell phone
 - Additional phone line?
 - Multifunction printer/copier/scanner
 - Office furniture

YOUR NEW WORKPLACE

- ❖ Computer system and software
 - Computer repair service
 - Data backup system
- ❖ Reference materials
 - Dictionary
 - Medical dictionary
 - Style manual(s)

POTENTIAL PITFALLS AND CONCERNS

- ❖ I won't find any work
- ❖ If I do find work, the client won't like what I do
- ❖ I'll go crazy working alone
- ❖ I'll lose touch with my field

USEFUL WEBSITES

- ❖ PubMed pubmed.gov
- ❖ PubMed Central pubmedcentral.gov
- ❖ NIH Public Access Policy publicaccess.nih.gov
- ❖ Food and Drug Administration www.fda.gov
- ❖ National Institutes of Health www.nih.gov

USEFUL WEBSITES

- ❖ AMWA membership benefits
 - Reference Manager®, Endnote® software
 - 50% discount
 - *AMA Manual of Style, Scientific Style and Format* (Council of Science Editors)
 - 20% discount
 - JPASS (academic journal access through JSTOR)
 - 25% discount
 - Other discounts
- amwa.org
- Membership
 - ▶ AMWA Membership
 - ▶ Discounts on education, events, and more

POTENTIAL CLIENTS

- ❖ Current freelancers
- ❖ Former employers
- ❖ Contractor research organizations
- ❖ Medical communication firms

POTENTIAL CLIENTS

- ❖ Medical schools/universities
- ❖ Hospitals/managed care providers
- ❖ Health care professional societies
- ❖ Medical/health-care trade publications

PRICING YOUR SERVICES

- ❖ Hourly rate
- ❖ Project fee
- ❖ Per-word/per-page rate

PRICING YOUR SERVICES

- ❖ “Living wage”:
 - Required annual income + 30% (expenses) + 30% (benefits) / average annual billable hours (1200 hours)
- ❖ “What the market will bear”
- ❖ Variable fee
 - Writing/editing
 - Project management
 - “Rush” job

HANDLING CONTRACTS

- ❖ Model freelance editorial agreement
 - www.editors.ca/hire/sfea/index.html
 - (Editors Association of Canada)

HANDLING CONTRACTS

- ❖ Scope of project
- ❖ What the client will provide
- ❖ What you’ ll deliver
- ❖ Timeline
- ❖ Style/format
- ❖ Number of revisions
- ❖ Price/payment terms

RECORD KEEPING

- ❖ Job/client folder
- ❖ Project file
- ❖ Billing/invoicing/time tracking

AMWA RESOURCES FOR FREELANCERS

- ❖ Freelance Directory
 - amwa.org
 - Career
 - ▶ Freelance Directory
- ❖ Jobs Online
 - amwa.org
 - Career
 - ▶ Jobs Online
 - ▶ Search Job Postings
 - ▶ Subscribe
 - ➔ Freelance

"PASSIVE" MARKETING

- ❖ Online freelance marketplaces
 - mediabistro.com
 - Membership
 - ▶ Freelance Marketplace
 - upwork.com
 - guru.com
- LinkedIn linkedin.com
 - Groups
 - ▶ American Medical Writers Association
 - ▶ Medical Writing and Affairs Association
 - ▶ Medical Writers Forum

"PASSIVE" MARKETING

- ❖ Other professional societies:
 - Council of Science Editors
 - councilscienceeditors-jobs.careerwebsite.com
 - ▶ Job Seekers
 - ▶ Job Alerts
 - Editorial Freelancers Association* the-efa.org
 - ▶ Hiring
 - ▶ Member Directory and Job List
 - Association of Health Care Journalists*
 - healthjournalism.org
 - ▶ Freelancers
 - ▶ Freelancer Directory

* Subscription required

GETTING THE WORK DONE

- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Focus
- ❖ Precision
- ❖ Deadlines
- ❖ Be prepared for a crisis

DON'T PANIC!

You aren't the first person to do this – or to suffer doubts about whether you can make it.

HOW TO BE A HAPPY FREELANCER

- 1. Take only interesting jobs**
 - (a) From nice people
 - (b) Who have money
- 2. Compromise only on point #1**

With thanks to Andrew Warren
awarren@synaptics.com

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

If you have additional questions,
please don't hesitate
to contact me
eleanor@elmcommunications.com

