



## Ten questions for ...

# Debbie Jordan

by Debbie Jordan

### In 100 words, what is your background and how did you become a freelancer?

I started my working life looking at the physiological effects of relocating animals involved in reintroduction projects, primarily red squirrel reintroductions in the UK. However, after a few years of getting bitten by both midges and squirrels, I looked for a new career that paid more than research grants! I took a job with Cyanamid Pharmaceuticals and worked as a CRA and then as a Project Manager. I moved into Medical Writing with a CRO when my first son was born and then became freelance to spend more time with my family when my second son was born.

### What is your most important piece of advice for people setting up a new business?

Be friendly and do a good job. You don't know where your work will come from, and building good relationships will generate more work than hundreds of pounds worth of advertising. But remember the old saying that you are only as good as your last piece of work ...

### What do you like about being a freelancer?

I like the flexibility of deciding my own working pattern and being able to work hours that fit in with my family and other aspects of my life. I also like having the control in deciding what type of work I take on and so can make sure I have some variety in the types of writing I do. Another advantage is managing to avoid most of the office politics!

### What do you dislike about being a freelancer?

Sometimes it can be a bit lonely since I am working at home on my own most days, but neighbours and non-working friends are usually around to have a coffee with if it gets too bad, and there are always other freelancers available at the end of a phone. I also don't like the fact that sometimes it is difficult to get away from work, and some clients expect you to be always available (not helped by mobile phones which mean you can be reached almost anytime and anywhere).

### What are your main sources of work?

I don't really have one main source of work—I have about 10 regular clients and then another 10 or so who give me occasional pieces of work, so I am quite lucky that I have a good range of work sources. The main type of work I do is clinical study reports and other regulatory documents, but I also do manuscripts, posters and other marketing material, so my scope is quite wide.

### What are the most rewarding projects to work on?

The ones that involve a nice team of people. If the people are nice and you are all working together to meet a deadline then it doesn't really matter what the work is.

### What are the least rewarding projects to work on?

I guess the opposite of the above, and working for nasty clients! Luckily it doesn't happen very often, but very occasionally you come across a client who seems impossible to please, however much you try. That's when having the flexibility to decide whether to work with someone again or not comes in very useful ...

### Do you have a preferred type of client? If yes, why?

The reasonable ones! I like working with clients who see the process as a 2-way collaboration and include me as part of the team and don't just dictate what I need to do and by when. I also like the clients who are realistic and ask me what time I need to do a project because however much they pay me, I can't create more hours in a day!

### What is the best way to say 'No' to clients?

I am not very good at saying 'No' to clients, I guess because the ones I work with regularly I like working for, so when they need me to help on something I find it impossible to turn them down because I know I will enjoy the project.

### Would you ever consider working for a company (again) as a fulltime employee? If yes, why?

This one is easy - definitely not! I love working as a freelance writer and I hope to continue doing so for as long as I can still see my computer screen and type on my keyboard.

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## Date for the diary

EMWA spring conference 26-30 May 2009 in Ljubljana, Slovenia