



Message from the President

by Julia Forjanic Klapproth

Time. It's something that nobody in today's technologically developed world has enough of. While it is undeniable that technology has made things possible we could never have conceived of previously, it also hinders us in ways we could never have imagined. Just take mail as an example of how technology turned a simple means of communication into a potentially time destroying beast. If you think about it, previously, an average working person on an average day (i.e. not a superstar or politician) would have received a few letters by normal mail. And that was it. There was no other form of mail. And often, a working person who was in a position to be receiving mail probably also had an assistant who filtered the mail for them. So on any given day, that person would only have to deal with a few communications. Now consider today's state of mail. We continue to get the regular mail. But e-mail has taken over life. Ignoring spam mail, a working person can get a hundred or more e-mails a day. And very few of us still have the luxury of having an assistant to filter those mountains of mail. We are expected to read, process, respond, and file all of these e-mails by ourselves. And due to the immediacy of the technology, if you haven't replied within a day, senders begin assuming something is wrong! The time needed each day just to process mail has gotten out of control before we even begin to do a minute of productive work.

Other demons possessing the industry and turning it into a frightening reality are share holder value and management bonuses. These two things lead executive level managers to invent timelines driven by the timing of dividend payouts or management performance goals rather than the humanly feasible. As a result, the expectations of what an individual, let alone a team, are meant to achieve or produce are moving into the realm of the absurd. Each time I work on a project for which the timelines have been dictated by upper management, I recognise a sickening trend. By helping the teams I work with meet those gruelling timelines, we are setting precedents for future teams. The ridiculous timelines we met by the skin of our teeth and a considerable lack of sleep become new goals for executive level managers to beat. Ultimately, by meeting timelines that are verging on the inhumane (because of the need to work around the clock 7 days a week, sometimes for 2 to 3 weeks at a time), we are supporting an industry-wide trend to push timeline expectations beyond the achievable.

Clearly, however, not all is as bleak as it may sound. There are some people who manage to get more done in a day than others, regardless of the fact that they are faced with the same beasts and demons as the rest of us. So the ques-

tion is, how do they do it? This issue of *The Write Stuff* focuses on just that question. How can we manage time to make it work for us instead of against us? Or, at a very minimum, how can we squeeze a little more into a working day without cutting into the non-working day? These are questions that relate to all of us, and a few tips on how to optimise our time management can never be a bad idea.

Speaking of managing time... make sure you mark 20–22 November this year in your calendars for the upcoming conference in London. In response to requests from our members, we are adding a new seminar to our programme. This will be a training session on GCP issues for medical writers for anyone out there who needs to provide a certificate of continued training in GCP to an auditor. The full programme for this conference will be available on the website by September. So be sure to check in then to find out what else is on offer and register early so you are sure to get a place in the sessions you are interested in.

I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming conference. And until then, may time be on your side.

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A new Medical Translation section for TWS!

Following the great success of the medical writing theme of the EMWA conference in Barcelona this spring a new medical translation section is being scheduled for *TWS*. I would be delighted if anyone interested in contributing ideas, articles, boxes with tidbits of practical information, dictionary or website reviews, terminology, etc. would contact me.

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