

Living and working in the northwest of France

scientific writing is part of a scientist's job and it is unethical to outsource it. Of course, I understood their apprehensions—I would have been suspicious myself if I was in their place. My only recourse was to try and convince them and ask them to wake up and smell the coffee. Well, you win some, you lose some, right? I now have a fair bit of following at Caen University-Hospital and a cancer research centre and the word is getting around. Also, they are oh! so relieved that they don't have to deal with me in English and fortunately they seem to understand my French. My major sources of irritation are the bureaucratic delays and the taxes (alluded to by Helen too, in her presentation). Hey, I'm getting used to it. Having said all this, I should add that it's possible that as a freelance medical writer just starting out, I might have had similar experiences in some other small town elsewhere in France.

So, the view from here is: sure, I am not working in the French Riviera nor in a happening place like Paris—I go there for vacations! All said and done, our kind of work is predominantly conducted via the Internet. In fact, the bulk of my business comes from outside Normandy, from outside France even. Personally, I am glad to be tucked away in this quaint little corner of France, quietly minding my own business. It works for me. An ambition to grow and succeed, and a fire in the belly (I don't mean the one after eating Indian food), are not likely to be dampened by the Normandy weather—it's all in the mind.

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Professional Indemnity Insurance

Professional Indemnity Insurance is an often-raised subject at the EMWA Freelance Business Forum (FBF). A small number of insurance companies now offer policies. The majority of freelancers remain uninsured, taking the view that as clients sign off on all authored documents, this effectively indemnifies them. From freelance discussions at the Nice FBF (12 November 2010), which focussed on insurance being taken out in the UK, we conclude:

- It is difficult to find an appropriate provision.
 - PIA commercial may be able to offer a suitable policy. Their insuring clause is relatively loose and they can provide different levels of limited liability. The premium should be in £100's/year but will be dependent on the personal circumstances of the individual
 - Hiscox offers similar insurance. An individual can stipulate the limit of liability to be the value of the contract being undertaken for a given client, or can stipulate the amount taken out in insurance
- Being a limited company will also limit your liability.

Freelance Resource Centre

Where can you find information of specific interest to the freelance medical writer? The answer is the Freelance Resource Centre (FRC) on the EMWA website. The FRC is a collection of good freelance advice from various sources: articles from *TWS*, minutes from the biannual Freelance Business Forum (FBF), and discussions from the now retired Freelance Email Discussion Forum. The FRC has recently been updated and now contains over 120 items categorised according to topic:

- Advice on starting-up and running a freelance business
- Legal aspects of running a freelance business
- Technical advice
- The personal experience of freelancers
- Journalism and translation, careers typically dominated by freelancers
- Conference forums, including FBF minutes, and e-mail discussions
- A general category, covering miscellaneous articles not fitting into the above categories

As you can see, you can find lots of useful information on different aspects of freelancing, and there is more to come. The FRC is a growing resource for new and experienced freelancers, where relevant materials from the FBF and the Out On Our Own section in *TWS* are (ir)regularly added as they become available. Behind the scenes, it is a collaboration as I manage the FRC updates with input from the EMWA Freelance Support Group, and the EMWA web team provide technical support.

Since the launch of the FRC in January 2010, there has been some maintenance work, but with changing requirements, we may need to do a thorough makeover of the FRC structure. What a new version would look like depends on what you, the EMWA freelancers, want. So, have a look at the FRC, and let us know of any ideas you have on how to develop this great resource to increase its usefulness and reflect your needs.

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