

course related to my work. I'm also ready to try something new. As important and challenging as it can be for freelancers to keep their knowledge current, it can be equally important and challenging to switch off from work. Anyone want to join me in

Roman Architecture or Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas?

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Using social media for self-promotion and business development

In the September 2013 issue of Out on Our Own I explained how I use social media for connecting and networking within the medical communications industry and wider afield. In this second article I will describe how I use social media to help ensure that I have a constant stream of work through self-promotion and business development. I am not a social media expert, but I have developed an interest in it in the last few years, and been fortunate to have access to experts who have been generous with their hints and tips.

LinkedIn™

My first foray into social media was with LinkedIn. Although my first aim was to use it to network with other medical writers and editors, as time went on I began to appreciate that LinkedIn could expand my business horizons – both within medical communications (as people that I was connected with moved on to new jobs), or because people from outside our industry needed a medical writer for a one-off project. Deciding to use LinkedIn as a promotional tool, rather than as a networking opportunity, however, meant engaging with it on a different level.

I was advised to make my LinkedIn profile as complete as possible to improve my 'discoverability' and to encourage searchers to contact me. Over time I have continued to refine and add to my LinkedIn profile, usually at LinkedIn's prompting, to ensure that it stays 95–100% complete. My intention is that my LinkedIn profile should contain enough information to allow a potential client to make the decision to shortlist me for a project.

Another aspect of engaging with LinkedIn was to start to use it to give status updates – particularly when I'm attending meetings (in case some of my contacts also are attending) – and to follow status updates (to identify opportunities to renew a personal contact – for example, when a contact moves to a new job). I also started to join in with discussions in LinkedIn groups that I belong to: sometimes, if someone else has managed to crystallise my thoughts, and I can't add anything more of value, I'll just hit the 'Like' button, occasionally I contribute my own thoughts and experiences – however, I'm always

conscious that I could do myself more harm than good by saying something silly or by writing something that would identify a client. I have noted an upturn in the number of people viewing my profile, and have received invitations to connect with other group members, after taking part in a discussion.

I would say that in terms of social media, LinkedIn is my most important tool for self-promotion and business development.

Twitter™

I joined Twitter just before my website went live in 2010. At that time, my only reasons for joining were the benefits that I was told it could bring to my website – and I will return to that later. As with LinkedIn, though, I soon started to see other possibilities. I followed the example of a fellow freelancer and started to post occasional Tweets (without mentioning clients or products) about the type of work that I was doing, and highlighting unusual projects or in-house interim contracts, for example, with the hope that the audience would see a versatile and flexible medical writer working in a range of therapeutic areas.

As with LinkedIn, Tweeting about (or sharing other people's Tweets about) new developments in medicine, news stories about the pharmaceutical industry, meetings that I am attending (in the real world or in cyberspace) etc., informs potential clients that I am here and taking an interest in issues relevant to the industry.

I believe that Twitter has its uses in direct self-promotion and business development, but its greater value is in networking, continuing education (a theme I will develop in my next Out On Our Own article), and indirectly supporting other business development efforts.

Google+™

This is a 'work in progress' for me, as I have only recently set up my Google+ account. I have completed my profile and started to build some circles, but I'm still exploring what to do with it. As in my early days with Twitter, my primary aim for Google+ is to drive traffic to my website.

All social media paths lead to www.freelancemedicalwriting.co.uk

My website is the most important part of my business development strategy. It presents a more detailed breakdown of services that I can offer potential clients than my freelancer listings allow; it contains testimonials from clients and – through a link to my blog site – potential clients can see examples of my writing style. However, the time and money invested in my website would be wasted if it was undiscoverable by people searching the internet.

Although some changes have occurred since my website was developed, search engine optimisation (SEO)¹ still relies on creating good backlinks (links from other websites) to improve search engine results page (SERP) rankings. As they carry a lot of SEO ‘weight’, I have linked my freelancer listings on EMWA.org and medcommsnetworking.co.uk, and my profiles on LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, and WordPress™ to my website. In addition, my

Twitter feed is plugged into my home page, so, as long as I Tweet regularly, that page is continuously updated, giving internet bots² more reason to re-index it and helping to improve its SERP ranking. Thus, the work done by my social media sites in pushing traffic to my website and improving its discoverability in internet searches, is at least as important as the direct opportunities that they present for self-promotion and business development.

¹SEO is designed to improve the chances of your website appearing higher on the results page than those of your competitors – consult a specialist for more information and guidance.

²Internet bots are software applications that run high speed, simple and structurally repetitive tasks – in this context they fetch, analyse and file information about the pages held on the web server that they are assigned to.

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Tool Box

ORCID: The key to correct attribution

National censuses show that the likelihood of two unrelated people sharing the same family name is high.¹ Ask anybody with the last names Johnson, Patel, Lee, or Garcia and they will tell you how their frequently occurring surnames can often lead to mix-ups in their private as well as professional lives.

Attribution and authorship

Attribution is defined as the act of attributing or ascribing, i.e. ascribing a piece of work to a particular person. Is this a Monet or a Manet? Was that Bach’s or Beethoven’s?

In academic institutions, accurate and reliable attribution of research outputs (e.g. publications) is of prime importance. And because in most cases multiple authors are involved, the order of attribution and the individual researcher’s contribution in a publication also need to be clearly defined.² After all, attribution is not only about getting the credits and honours but also about responsibility and accountability. The example below illustrates how common surnames can complicate academic authorship:

Yu XM, Wang L, Li JF, Liu J, Li J, Wang W, Wang J, Wang C. Wnt5a inhibits hypoxia-induced pulmonary arterial smooth muscle cell proliferation

by downregulation of β -catenin. *Am J Physiol Lung Cell Mol Physiol.* 2013;304(2):L103–11.

ORCID and publications

In 2012, ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) was launched to provide a unique identifier for researchers, thus addressing the problem of correct attribution of scientific publications. This ‘machine-readable, 16-digit unique digital identifier’³ is similar to a barcode and aims to link researchers with their academic output, regardless of a change of affiliations or names.

The ORCID is far from the first of its kind in attempting authorship disambiguation. Over the years, many publishers have issued log-in names or unique IDs to submitting authors. There is also the ISO-certified International Standard Name Identifier (ISNI) which is the ‘global standard number for identifying the millions of contributors to creative works and those active in their distribution, including writers, artists, visual creators, performers, researchers, producers, publishers, aggregators, and more’.⁴ ORCID is the academic or scholarly equivalent of ISNI and the two systems have issued a joint statement on interoperation.⁵

Claiming uniqueness ‘in its ability to reach across disciplines, research sectors, and national boundaries and its cooperation with other identifier