

Out On Our Own

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Freelance Section

Welcome to the first OOOO of 2012.

Let us start with Tool Box where Julia Powell gives us a review of Toggl, a handy desk-top time tracking tool to help us measure our productivity.

Then, Anu brings us another brain-teasing medical writing jumble.

The May 2012 Cyprus Freelance Business Forum (FBF), attended by 30 members, and reflecting the slightly reduced overall conference registration, was non-the-less as lively as ever. We were delighted to welcome Susan Bhatti, our President, who sat in, listened and advised that she would

follow-up to check on responsibility for policing the EMWA LinkedIn page, which despite restrictions relating to the content of posts, frequently has job adverts posted. A request for assistance with writing up the 2012 Freelance Business Survey report for publication in Medical Writing (MEW) Journal later this year, was generously responded to with offers of help from Anne McDonough and Marie Helene Hayles. With a little encouragement, we had a ten entries for the handwriting competition but with only five getting two matches correct, there is no outright winner, but well done and thanks to everyone for joining in anyway. Full FBF meeting minutes are available on the EMWA website in the Freelance Resource Centre (FRC).

Medical Writing Jumble # 2

1. Rearrange the jumbled letters to get a meaningful word related to medical writing.
2. Next, take the circled letters from each word and make a new word(s) that will answer the riddle in the cartoon. Hint: The answer is probably a pun.
3. Use British English.

THARE

GEARN

DAMIEN

TERRPO



Answer:

by Anuradha Alahari | Illustration: Anders Holmqvist

See page 81 for the answers.

The tool box

Toggl, a desktop time tracking tool

I use a handy desktop timer tool called Toggl to help me keep track of how long tasks and overall projects take. I first came across Toggl by chance when I started out as a freelancer and was searching on the internet for a free tool to help me do this. Initially I was looking for a spreadsheet to save me having to create one, but discovered Toggl instead and have never looked back. It is so easy to use that even a non-techie like me can cope with it.

You start by creating a Toggl account (www.toggl.com) with the option of the basic free plan (located in small text under 'pricing' tab) or you can sign up for a free trial followed by a monthly fee. I find the free plan sufficient for my needs, but the paid-for option does have some useful extra features.

You can either track time on the web page or you can download a desktop timer (from the 'Extras' page), choosing the 'nano' as shown in Figure 1 or the slightly larger 'classic' timer. Both timer styles have a big red stop/start button that you can put wherever you like on your desktop (and handy to pin to your taskbar in Windows 7).

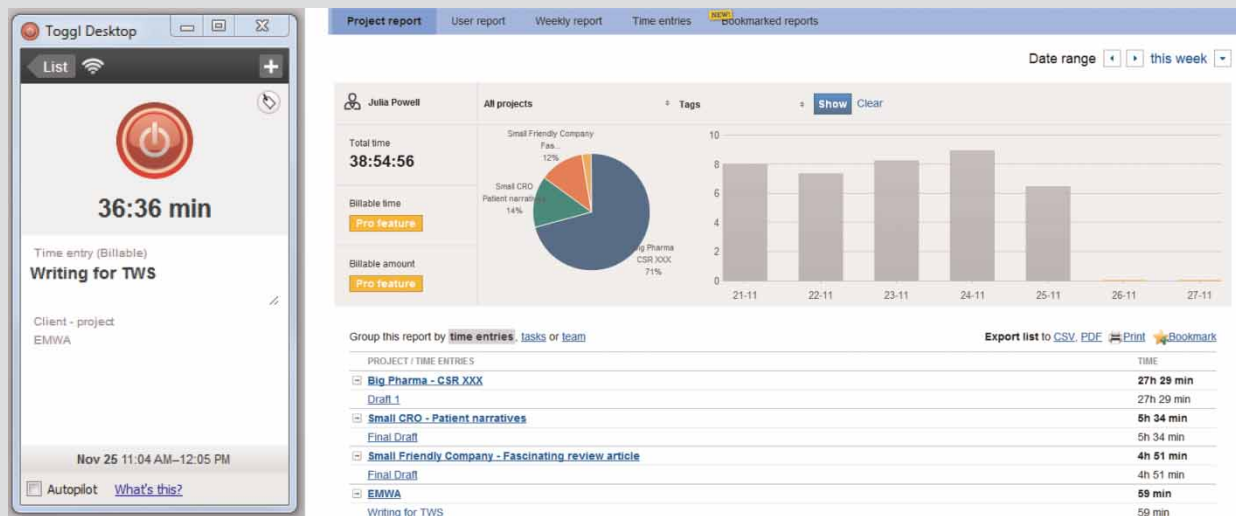


Figure 1.: (left) The 'nano' desktop timer. Figure 2.: (right) A sample project report.

Entries for clients and projects can be set up on the desktop timer or in your account on the Toggl web page and they are automatically synchronized across both. To start timing a project you simply click on the button to turn it from grey to red and the timing starts, and then click on it again to stop. If you start it again the timer continues counting from where it had stopped. You can easily swap between different clients/projects, creating multiple entries for each day if you need to.

Toggl is not only useful if you charge by the hour, but also great for building up a picture of how long things realistically take as you can produce a variety of different reports by client or project broken down by task. Reports can be viewed on the screen as bar charts, line graphs, pie charts, or lists and exported into PDF or CSV format. I have used the reports occasionally to support an invoice, although I should

point out that you can edit all aspects of the results and even add/delete entries posthoc if you want to (such as in the report for a totally fictitious week's work in Figure 2).

Toggl also helps provide more accurate 'evidence-based' estimates for future work. Whether you choose to press the stop button on Toggl when having a coffee break, answering a non-related phone call or email or nipping out to the post office, or just leave it running throughout the working day is up to you, but you would be amazed at the difference it makes and it gives you an idea of how productive you really are.

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For a full explanation of how to set up Toggl, go to:
<http://support.toggl.com/kb/general/getting-started-toggl-basics>

Editor's note: Readers might also be interested in the open-source time-tracking software called Rachota (<http://rachota.sourceforge.net>), which Pamela Waltl wrote about in *The Write Stuff* 20(2): 91 and 20(4): 228

Answers to Medical Writing Jumble #2:
PREGNANT, HEART, RANGE, MEDIAN, REPORT and