

Out on Our Own

SECTION EDITORS



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Editorial

The theme for the FBF at the Munich conference was *Out On Our Own but Not Alone*. With an impressive attendance by more than 60 freelancers (FLs) from Europe and beyond, and also a special guest – Dr Andreas Lutz of the VGSD, a German association fostering freelancing – we rolled out new initiatives in building relationships with other associations that could help us in running our businesses (for those interested, minutes are available in the Freelance Resource Centre of the EMWA website). Thank you and we hope to see more of you in Brussels ... we are not alone!

In this edition of the OOOO we continue along those lines...

Marco Torregrossa, the Secretary Gen-

eral of the European Forum of Independent Professionals (EFIP; www.efip.org) gives us an introduction to this collaboration of various European national groups, and the activities EFIP are involved in to support and promote the freelance way of working. We are also excited to inform you that in future OOOO editions, Marco will be covering various topics related to freelancers that we'll definitely find interesting, pertinent, and enlightening!

In the last few years, a novel concept of co-working has made rapid ground among freelancers and small-business owners worldwide. The central idea behind this concept is innovation and networking, allowing FLs to rent spaces in 'workhubs' along with others on a part-time basis and use the support services provided by such facilities. In this edition, the Association of

Independent Professionals and the Self Employed (IPSE) gives us a glimpse into the world of co-working and useful links for those wishing for more information.

We also bring you the third and last part of Marion Alzer's article on her career as a medical translator. In this part, Marion talks about her established business and the approaches she has made to diversify and add value to her services, and reflects on her career choice. To those of us interested in becoming medical translators, Marion's article is certainly helpful.

Finally, if you have an article that you wish to contribute to the OOOO and share with your fellow FLs, please feel free to send it to us. In the meantime, happy reading and best wishes.

**Julie Charlesworth
and Satyen Shenoy**

The coworking revolution

"I can't believe how much more productive I am since working from home," said Andrea, who had just started working as a freelance medical writer after years of doing the nine to five (or more often nine to nine) routine in an office.

Without the distractions of office life it can be much easier to focus. None of those constant interruptions from colleagues. No more emails advising you of the latest parking policy, or asking you to attend another all-staff meeting. Gone are the weekly fire alarm tests.

You're free to devote your energy to producing excellent work, which is why clients hire you.

Working from home also has an added benefit – you can take a 15 minute break to go and hang out the washing. Short breaks have been shown to boost concentration and productivity, so you can have an ordered house without feeling guilty!

However, there is a downside to working on your own. Over time it can start to feel a little bit... quiet.

You also miss out on those 'watercooler moments', as Silicon Valley executives like to call them, in other words, the casual encounters with colleagues, such as when making coffee in the staff kitchen. These moments can be a great source of new ideas, or an exchange of important information you wouldn't otherwise have come across.

A study¹ by workhubs.com found that nearly half of homeworkers (44%) struggled with having their work disturbed by other household members and 37% said that the lack of mental stimulation or interaction was a problem.

This is why the concept of coworking is becoming so popular. It offers the best of both worlds.

What is coworking?

Coworking spaces have been appearing in cities all over the world, and increasingly in smaller towns as well. Sometimes also known as 'workhubs', they are shared office spaces, providing a cost-effective solution for freelancers and other small business owners

to work from, often on a part-time basis.

Most of them offer flexible packages, allowing you to book a workspace by the hour or day, or for a certain number of days per month. For example, some people work two days a week from a coworking hub, and for the remaining three days they work from home.

The key thing that distinguishes a 'coworking' space from a more traditional rented workspace is the idea of collaboration. Many of them have this as their core philosophy, and make it an integral part of their offering.

For example, THECUBE in London (thecubelondon.com) says:

"When you join THECUBE, you join more than just a workspace, you join a curated, diverse and smart community of scientists, engineers, designers, technologists, artists, futurists and anthropologists. Our workspace helps our members innovate through our events, innovation labs and one to one mentoring. As a community we actively collaborate to create innovative sol-

utions via our consultancy and independent projects.”

The concept of a collaborative workspace for independent professionals is widely thought to have started with the iconic C-base, which was founded in Berlin in 1995 as a ‘hackerspace’, where people with common interests could meet, share knowledge, and experiment.

By 2007 the term ‘coworking’ had become one of the most widely searched terms on Google, and in 2012 it even got its own conference to celebrate “a worldwide explosion of coworking awesomeness”. In true digital style it was named the Global Coworking Unconference Conference (gcuc.co).

Coworking has seen astonishing growth over the last five years – the number of coworking hubs around the world has almost doubled every year. This has been fuelled in large part by the overall trend towards independent working and the modern innovation-driven economy, which relies heavily on freelance talent (see www.ipse.co.uk/research).

Embracing innovation

Coworking hubs tend to place a great deal of emphasis on creating a distinctive look and feel. As a result they have a lot of character, which attracts forward-thinking people and gives them an air of excitement – a certain ‘buzz’.

As well as being an inspiring place to work, they can be a great place to meet clients – many coworking hubs offer affordable rates for meeting rooms. Often they also offer business address and mail forwarding services, allowing you to present a professional, innovative image to the outside world.

The chance to mingle with diverse professionals is another key factor. Although the majority of people who use coworking hubs are freelancers working on their own independent projects, it’s not unusual to see groups huddled together swapping ideas.

Of course you’re under no obligation to chat if you don’t want to, but many freelancers value the chance to share information freely about each other’s

businesses, which can trigger thoughts for a different way of doing things, and sometimes even lead to new projects.

Mandy Taylor, who works from Coachwerks, a UK coworking hub, says that the mix of people and skills makes it “amazingly fecund.” She says, “you’re encouraged to try running workshops because everyone assumes you can do it. You’re pushed to try things you wouldn’t normally. There’s also the benefit of a critical second opinion.”²

Freelancer James Holloway says: “Even though I’ve only been here a few weeks I’ve noticed a significant increase in my productivity. I read a study that showed that mixing in diverse social groups produces more innovative thinking and I feel that’s an important aspect of coworking. On a more practical level, the email group has proved helpful – people will chip in with advice. I’m also starting a personal branding exercise, so those different perspectives will be helpful.”

An iconic coworking hub near you

There are now over 1600 coworking hubs across Europe. For a list of prominent hubs

in each country, visit www.jobfluent.com/the-ultimate-list-of-coworking-spaces-in-europe. You can also find a comprehensive map of hubs all over the world at www.coworkingvisamap.com.

If you’re a member of IPSE (www.ipse.co.uk), the UK Association of Independent Professionals and the Self

Employed, you can use a London coworking

hub for up to four days a month, completely free of charge. You can choose from

any one of 80 coworking hubs across the city, courtesy of www.workspace.co.uk/co-working.

The IPSE membership card also allows you to touch in and touch out at over 250 workspaces around the UK – just pay for the time you use.

So if you love the experience of working for yourself, but want to add that extra buzz to your week, spending some time in a coworking hub could give you a much needed dose of energy and inspiration!

References

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2. The Werks, Hove. Workhubs Network 2010 (cited 2016 May 4). Available from: http://www.workhubs.com/sites/default/files/pagedocs/the_werks_hove.pdf

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Medical translation – a dead-end job or a gateway to opportunity? Part 3

An established business

Today, my translation business is well-established. Clients range from large pharmaceutical and biotech companies and CROs to small and medium-sized organisations which include regulatory consultancies, medical centres, patient organisations, translation agencies, academic institutions, and even private individuals.

My clients typically require translation from English into German of one of the following types of text:

Typical texts I translate

- Press releases / newsletters / websites
- Training / educational materials
- Product monographs
- Patient brochures
- Protocol synopses
- Patient informed consent documents
- Patient diaries / questionnaires
- Original articles
- Posters
- Abstracts
- Presentations
- Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC), patient information leaflets, labelling
- Dear Health Care Professional letters
- Medical reports
- Benefit dossiers for health technology assessment
- Inspection reports (GCP, GMP)
- Standard operating procedures
- Guidelines
- Job descriptions

Diversifying

To offer my clients additional value, I applied to the higher regional court for authorisation to certify translations. This is an official procedure common in Germany which grants the applicant the right to certify translations needed for official and legal purposes. I am now publicly appointed and sworn in by a Bavarian court and have the right to officially certify translations. Box 2 provides some examples.

Translations I have certified

- Certificates of Pharmaceutical Products and SmPCs for importing medicinal products into countries in the Middle East
- License to practice dental medicine for a dentist emigrating to Dubai
- Scientific opinion issued by the European Commission on the safety of breast implants for a lawsuit in Germany

Being a sworn translator unlocks additional job opportunities. In one case, the client explicitly requested the presence of a sworn translator to assist communication during an FDA inspection at a clinical site. My tasks were to interpret the inspectors' interactions with the investigator and to read entries in medical files and convert them from German into English for the inspectors. This enabled them to verify data submitted for a New Drug Application against source. My previous work experience as a CRA and

familiarity with patient files proved invaluable for this job. Similarly, in specific settings, I offer liaison interpreting which is the oral transfer of short spoken passages. These settings also include inspections by supervisory or regulatory authorities, or local Ethics Committee meetings where non-German speaking sponsors defend their clinical trials.

Another area that translators may consider is foreign language teaching. I have taught German and English as a foreign language to health-care professionals and led medical translation workshops. Although teaching is enjoyable, the preparation required can be time consuming.

Finally, medical writing should not be underestimated in providing translators with a whole range of opportunities. Some years ago, I attended a medical translation workshop where I met Susanne Geercken. Susanne, an experienced EMWA workshop leader, explained to me that translators could benefit from the association's professional development programme and encouraged me to become an EMWA member. Thereafter, I completed my foundation certificate in medical writing and have subsequently secured my first freelance medical writing jobs.

Reflections of a translator

More recently my work experience has included more emphasis on medical writing and even monitoring clinical trials which reflects the diversity of my work. The work never stops changing. Far from being a dead end, medical translation provided me with a solid basis to take on so many new roles – certainly not the boring career I feared when I started!



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What's happening at the European level:

The European Forum of Independent Professionals (EFIP) and why you should know about it

The European Forum of Independent Professionals (EFIP; www.efip.org) is furthering a commitment to build a better economy – one that puts people at the centre of it, empowering anyone to work for themselves and succeed on their own terms. We are a European not-for-profit collaboration of national associations (*see box right*) which represents over 10 million independent professionals at EU level through targeted research, advocacy and campaigning. Independent professionals (often referred to as freelancers or contractors) are highly-skilled self-employed workers without employers or employees. They offer specialised services of a knowledge-based nature and work on a flexible basis in a range of creative, managerial, scientific and technical occupations, primarily in B2B. They are the smallest of small businesses and, with a 45% increase since 2004, they are the fastest growing segment of the EU labour market.¹

Freelance workers are an important, but hidden, part of the small business population. While we know the creative and information sectors combined (where medical writers belong) is the second largest group of freelancers, we lack EU wide data for the freelance medical profession. In the UK it has been estimated that independent healthcare professionals in 2015 have grown at a rate of 67.7% compared to 2008.² The main driver behind working as an independent professional is a strong commitment

Organisation

Organisation	Country of origin
Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed (IPSE)	United Kingdom
Verband der Gründer und Selbstständigen e.V (VGSD)	Germany
Associazione Consulenti Terziario Avanzato (ACTA)	Italy
FEDIPRO vzw	Belgium
Platform Zelfstandige Ondernemers (PZO)	Netherlands
Fédération des Auto-Entrepreneurs (FEDAE)	France
Syndicat des Consultants Formateurs Indépendants (SYCFI)	France
Asociatia Freelancerilor (AF)	Romania
Stowarzyszenie Samozatrudnieni	Poland
Croatian Independent Professionals Association (CIPA)	Croatia
Unión de Profesionales y Trabajadores Autónomos (UPTA)	Spain
Swedish Umbrella Companies Trade Association (<i>Affiliate Member</i>)	Sweden

and reliance on skills and professional development. The problems independent healthcare professionals may experience are related to keeping up to date on developments within the medical industry, which is subject to considerable regulation and operates within strict codes of practice and standards that frequently change. Keeping up with these matters is difficult which is why EFIP has for a long time advocated that access to affordable training is of paramount importance to independent

professionals which needs to be at the same levels and standards offered to employees.

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2. Kitchling J. Exploring the UK freelance workforce in 2015. 2016 [cited May 2016]. Available from: <https://www.ipse.co.uk/sites/default/files/documents/research/Exploring-uk-freelance-workforce-2015-reportv1.pdf>.



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Brussels 2016 – save the date

