

# Out on Our Own

## SECTION EDITORS



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## Editorial

In this edition of OOOO, we are pleased to bring to you four diverse and thought-provoking articles, and some practical tips. We thank you for your contributions and once again invite you to submit any articles that you wish to share with your fellow EMWA members.

At the EMWA Conference in Spring 2016, we introduced the Freelance Business Forum (FBF) to the concept of informal local get-togethers as an opportunity for freelancers to interact and network with others with similar and related interests in close proximity. This idea has already made solid ground in the UK and freelancers based there are meeting regularly. In her article on local get-togethers in the UK, Corinne Swainger, with inputs from fellow UK freelancers, relates how this came about and how relatively simple it can be to organise such gatherings. We think these

pointers and tips would be very useful for others who wish to set up such events in their region. It is also very heartening to see that some of our freelancers are now taking the initiative to facilitate local networking in other countries such as France and Germany. Carola Krause and Paul Wafula, two of our members based in Germany recently organised a local get-together in Berlin and in their article they share their experience of what was clearly a wonderful evening.

Freelancing as a profession is growing Europe-wide and increasing numbers mean that, the 'solopreneurs', require adequate representation when it comes to policies and guidelines relating to self-employment framed at a national and regional level. So, what are the issues? Continuing the theme from his article in the previous edition of OOOO, Marco Torregrossa, the Secretary-General of the European Forum of Independent Professionals, advances a discussion about how our numbers are making a statement at the European level when

legislation regarding labour markets is being drafted.

As professionals, we value our work, give our best to our clients, and expect a suitable remuneration in return. However, as in any business, negotiating the rates for our services is a constant concern requiring careful consideration. In bringing to you an article by IPSE on negotiating pay rates, we hope to give you that extra leverage when next your clients say, "We'd like you to do this project for us. Please send us a quotation."

As the holiday season approaches, we'd like to wish you all a very enjoyable and relaxing time and a Happy New Year. Finally, we hope that you will continue to provide us with articles and suggestions in order that we may continue to further the freelance cause. Happy reading

**Julie Charlesworth  
and Satyen Shenoy**

## Successful informal freelancer meet-ups increase local UK networking

Although I really value the freedom and flexibility that I've had over the past ten years as freelance medical copywriter, I often find that it can become very socially isolating – despite being surrounded by social media 24-hours a day. And I'm not the only one. Various studies also show that it's important for people who work remotely to regularly interact with real people, especially their peers.<sup>1</sup>

Annual and bi-annual industry conferences, organised by professional groups such as EMWA, offer an excellent opportunity for freelancers to enhance their specialist skills, hear opinion leaders' views, and network with other freelance and full-time colleagues. But while you may stay in touch with them online, the reality is that you probably won't see them again on a face-to-face basis until the next major conference.

That's why, towards the end of 2014, I was very interested to see that two established UK freelance medical writers – Jane Tricker and Michael Shaw – had each started small, informal get-togethers on a regional basis. They were

promoting these gatherings on LinkedIn through the MedComms Networking website (<http://www.MedCommsNetworking.com>), which is a social networking community for professionals working in and around the pharmaceutical communications industry.

### Word spreads fast

Since 2014, word about the success of these informal, regional meetings has spread fast. Over the past year, other medical freelancers have started organising their own gatherings in various regions of the UK, including Kent, Cheshire, North West London, Cambridge/East Anglia, Leeds, North Wales, Brighton, Central Scotland, and North East UK.

Jane Tricker, who organised the first of these initial informal freelancer gatherings, explains what prompted her to get started. "I was on a panel of experienced medical writers at three of the original MedComms Freelancers Workshops that Peter ran, held in London, Oxford and Macclesfield. There, I got the strong impression

that medical freelancers benefit hugely from sharing their experiences in informal surroundings – in terms of practical hints and tips and moral support."

"I held the first get-together in November 2014. I just chose a pub and a date, and let people know through the MedComms LinkedIn pages. We had seven people that evening, including five freelancers – writers and editors – from across Kent and one copywriter from London. I thought about raising some subjects that freelancers might want to talk about, such as training or time management, in case it was difficult to get it going, but once everyone had introduced themselves, the conversation flowed quite naturally."

### New freelance colleagues

After contacting Jane and Michael for their advice, I decided to arrange an informal get-together of my own in June 2015. After posting an invitation on the MedComms LinkedIn page, I wondered if anyone would reply to it. However,

I didn't have to wait long. Six people attended our first get-together in North West London, which included three freelance medical writers, a medical editor and a project manager. Some were members of EMWA or other professional industry groups, while others were not. But having a mix of different freelancers really fuelled our discussion about the challenges of balancing life, family and finances as a medical freelancer, and generated some laughs about dealing with difficult clients.

Since we began, the NW London group has had three more informal meetings. It's been great to stay connected to new colleagues. The numbers of attendees have varied depending on each individual's schedule. However, even three people in July 2015 were enough to have a good chat, discuss personal and professional freelance issues, and gossip about local and international events. At one get-together, we were joined by an in-house writer who was thinking about going freelance and wanted to hear our first-hand experiences of life as a medical freelancer.

### Keep it informal

Because these local informal groups are not necessarily 'owned' by any one professional association, they are open to all medical freelancers. So you don't need to pay any membership fees, event fees or major transportation costs. Essentially, they are a great way of complementing larger associations, rather than competing with them.

Smaller informal meetings for new and experienced medical freelancers help to spread the word about upcoming opportunities across regional, UK and global communications. Each

**Informal freelancer meet-ups are an excellent way of discussing your own business challenges, sharing freelance opportunities, making new local friends and laughing about life.**

group tends to adapt these meet-ups to match their own needs but there's one overriding message each of the organisers mentioned: "Keep it informal."

"Personally, I wouldn't want to do anything too formal and I think medical freelancers just enjoy talking to other freelancers. You don't need to set up any structured meeting. News about industry topics and training sessions just gets passed on through our casual conversations," says Jane.

### Definitely worthwhile

Jen Lewis, a freelance medical writer and director in Norfolk, started a regional group across the Cambridgeshire/East Anglia area. "It's definitely worthwhile organising an informal freelancer meet up. From my point of view, it's a great way of sharing your experiences in business, and just knowing that there are others in the same boat as you are," she says.

"We try and meet a few times a year at different locations, alternating between two towns in the middle of our rather large geographical area," she explains. "We also meet on different days of the week and at different times of the day or evening. Rather than pre-book a table, we generally just meet at a certain pub

that is likely to be able to accommodate us, and let everyone decide what to do about food or drink once we've arrived. One exception to that was our Christmas meal, where we did book a table. A few of us had been reminiscing about office Christmas parties, so we thought we'd have our own last year. It was a fun night and great for creating a stronger bond within our small group."

### Make it easy to access

"The North West UK group is small and spread out across various areas," says Lisa Stewart, a freelance writer who organises an informal group in Cheshire. "We meet at a pub-restaurant that is conveniently located on a motorway junction so this makes it easy to access, even for people who don't know the area that well. We are aiming for quarterly get-togethers around 8pm. The first time it was just a drink, although a couple of people chose to eat. For the first meeting, I took a little sign that said 'Med-Comms' to identify myself. But since then we have booked a table in the restaurant section so people can ask the staff where we are sitting. I'd say about three-quarters of our attendees now eat there. Some people have asked about lunch meetings but there seems to be very little enthusiasm for that."

### New work opportunities

Fiona Weston, who runs Weston Editorial Services, organised a local Leeds get-together in July 2016. "It was attended by about 5 people in addition to me," she explains. "We opted for a lunch meeting since everyone involved had to travel a fair distance, and evenings were difficult for a few freelancers because of children and other domestic responsibilities. I booked a

## 8 tips for launching local freelancer meetings

Although there are no set rules for organising your own medical freelancers' gatherings, the following tips may help:

- 1 **Choose a convenient date:** try to avoid scheduling these in the Summer holidays; too close to Christmas, or other major medical freelancer or industry events
- 2 **Find an easily accessible location:** such as a local pub or restaurant with close links to public transport and low-cost/free parking
- 3 **Post these details on LinkedIn pages:**
  - Post your local meeting details on your own LinkedIn page and ask any freelancers who are interested to contact you through that

- Also contact Peter Llewellyn (peter@networkpharma.com) to post the details on the MedComms Networking site
- 4 **Spread the word:** encourage all local medical freelancer professionals you know to attend, including members and non-members of EMWA, such as independent medical writers, editors, project managers, directors, translators and consultants
  - 5 **Give people at least 4-6 weeks' notice:** before the event, and send out frequent reminders through emails and your LinkedIn page during that time

- 6 **Keep it informal:** at the gathering, introduce yourself as the organiser, and allow all freelancers to just network amongst themselves, and decide if they personally want to eat or drink
- 7 **Consider using Doodle to schedule future dates:** try setting up a Doodle poll (<http://doodle.com/>) to arrange a future get-together for attendees who are interested in meeting again. This is a quick way to find the most convenient date and time for everyone.
- 8 **Try meeting around 3-4 times a year:** depending on your attendees' availability

restaurant with the aim of us all eating lunch, and then I brought along a voucher for that, which meant we all saved money on the cost, pleasing everyone!”

“We all seemed to enjoy meeting fellow medical freelancers in the region. One of the people who attended it asked another freelancer to do some work for her when she got behind with a project. So it worked out well for both of them, as they had not met before until that lunch.”

“I think it is worth planning meetings locally to keep contacts going and to give us all a sense of being connected – freelancing can be a lonely business for some. We are planning our next meeting later this year in October.”

### Regular real-life benefits

“I think these informal get-togethers are very valuable as it’s very easy to become isolated as a freelancer,” points out Michael Shaw who held the second informal freelancers meeting in Brighton and Hove on the south coast of England. “We’re a small group, and always meet in a pub with good transport links and reasonable parking. At least one of us will have a photo on LinkedIn, so recognising each other isn’t a problem! We just meet informally – some people eat there, others don’t.”

Personally, one of the key benefits for me in organising and attending the group in North West London is the chance to interact with real,

live colleagues on a more regular basis. I enjoy finding out how other freelancers are handling their businesses and lives within this industry. Some freelancers have recommended local website designers and accountants. And now that we know each other a bit better, we have passed on opportunities to each other about potential new freelance projects.

On average, most informal groups tend to meet up around three times a year, and usually announce any meetings around 4-6 weeks in advance. It helps to avoid scheduling meetings in the school holidays or too close to major industry, communications or freelancer events, such as the EMWA conference.

### Open to all medical freelancers

Peter Llewellyn, founder and manager of the MedComms Networking community (<http://www.medcommsnetworking.com/>) has played a major role in promoting and encouraging these informal events. He says:

“Freelancers by definition, work alone much of the time. Sharing experiences and gaining support from other freelancers is very valuable, especially where there is common understanding of the specific issues involved. So local informal gatherings of freelancers working in and around medical communications can only be useful for everyone.

“I applaud those who have already taken the initiative to arrange these informal UK events.

They are open to all medical freelancers. I hope we’ll see many more such gatherings happening, and I’ll certainly help spread the word about any I know of.”

### Just go for it!

If you’re thinking of starting your own group, then Michael Shaw says: “Just go for it! There are no hard and fast rules – I get the impression that the various get-togethers around the country all have different formats, and all seem to be quite successful and worthwhile.”

### Reference

1. Parry L. Is freelancing a lonely business? 2014 [cited 2016 Sept 29]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/work-blog/2014/jul/22/freelancing-lonely-business>

### Acknowledgments

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## EMWA encourages local meetings for medical writers and communicators

“EMWA is supportive of local medical freelancer gatherings which are often particularly useful to freelancers,” explains Julie Charlesworth. She and Satyen Shenoy became the new co-hosts of the Freelance Business Forum (FBF) in January 2016. “We have promoted these informal

meetings on the EMWA LinkedIn page. We have encouraged attendees to discuss this topic at the FBF in Munich earlier this year and also highlighted these meetings at the FBF in Brussels in November.”

The FBF is a meeting held at the bi-annual EMWA conferences. It provides a platform

for EMWA freelancers to share best practice and network informally with other freelancers from various countries in Europe. Julie and Satyen are also the new co-editors of Out On Our Own (OOOO), which is the freelance section of *Medical Writing*.



## Birmingham 2017 Save the Date

The 44th EMWA Conference in Birmingham, England will be held on 2 - 6 May 2017 at the ICC.

### For further information:

[http://www.emwa.org/EMWA/Conferences/Conference/Birmingham\\_2017.aspx](http://www.emwa.org/EMWA/Conferences/Conference/Birmingham_2017.aspx)

# Networking through informal gatherings, the way in

One of the many take-home messages from the Freelance Business Forum (FBF) at the Munich conference was the call to expand networking activities among freelancers in their local areas under informal settings. The objective was simple but effective; to create an opportunity to help and support each other in solving daily challenges affecting freelancers in their businesses or even simply to just interact and get to know colleagues in our local areas. Some of us were attending the conference for the first time and being relatively new in the business, there was a need for such a forum not only for freelancers but also for those interested in the profession.

Taking heed of this message, we embarked immediately on planning to set up a meeting for colleagues in Berlin and its environs. The concept of local gatherings which involves minimal travel and minimal cost was inspiring. Together with other colleagues in Berlin and Brandenburg, we finally managed to organise our first meeting mid-summer this year. We would like to share with you our experiences in regard to the active involvement in the process.

## More contacts

Setting up the informal gathering brought with it new contacts. This was in two phases; within the organising team itself and to a large extent, with the colleagues who were invited to the gathering. It was very encouraging that so many people accepted our invitations to attend. Those who could not make it expressed their willingness to

join the next meeting. The reaction was impressive. In this business, networking and business contacts are important: the process helped us to expand our business contact circle.

## Business opportunities

Getting to know new colleagues and interacting at a personal level brought more exposure to business opportunities. It led to getting referrals for business opportunities in cases where colleagues who got offers were not able to take up projects due to their other commitments at particular times. During the gathering itself, ideas on how to create more business opportunities and how to share them within contacts were also proposed. In addition, we saw it beneficial not to restrict our gathering entirely to freelancers as colleagues in fixed employment were interested to interact with other medical writers. This we saw as an important link to business opportunities in future.

## Support, mentorship, and education

During the informal gathering, participants shared professional experience, information and how to approach new projects and contractors. It was encouraging to see the willingness of the more experienced medical writers to help out new colleagues in the business. The need to have education topics in our future meetings was suggested as a way to support others in areas we had expertise in. There was an atmosphere of everyone wanting each other to succeed.

## Simply unwinding

In a relaxing atmosphere we also had the chance to have interesting general discussions on wine, food, and Berlin's history and culture. It was interesting to note that among the group, we had experts in aspects of life, other than medical writing. We shared our "positive accidents" of how we became medical writers and discovered we had more in common than being medical writers... we simply connected. We had colleagues who were reconnecting, having been workmates years before and not having met for a while.

All in all, it was an evening well spent; new professional friendships and contacts were made, we shared the goal of making each other better through business interactions. The responses of the community in general were great and led to the setup of our own "Freelance Medical Writers' informal gathering, Berlin-Brandenburg LinkedIn Group ([www.linkedin.com/groups/8553972](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/8553972)) and the initiation of periodic gatherings in the Berlin-Brandenburg area.

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*Participants at the second informal gathering at Café Orange in Berlin*

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# How European solopreneurs are creating the future of work

**Solo-entrepreneurs (solopreneurs) are fast becoming a very important part of the EU labour market. But those who work for themselves need better support from policymakers to ensure legislation is clear, accessible, and not overly burdensome.**

Look around: the EU is experiencing a surge in independent working and the trend is growing. Coworking spaces have sprung up in towns across the continent and new independent professions are emerging. In the wake of the forthcoming EU Directive on the Single-Member Companies – currently debated in the European Parliament – support for solopreneurs is gaining ground across Europe.

Suppose tomorrow morning Mr Juncker wakes up and says: “I will never be able to create all the jobs I need in the present economic climate. So, I have to focus on generating as much quality work as I can for my fellow European citizens and attract more people into the labour market. I will focus on flexible and independent work instead. I will focus on empowering solopreneurs”.

New ways of working have already transformed the entertainment, media, and publishing industries and the same is now happening in many other sectors – from transportation to accommodation, finance to education. Goods and services are becoming more readily and cheaply available, in smaller parts, and from a larger number of suppliers. Consumers expect to be able to order a cab, a movie, or even a doctor on demand. Today’s companies, too, expect workers to be available on short notice, for particular tasks, with specialised skills. This means work is more available than ever, but in a different way than before. Instead of one job from one employer, workers now hold several jobs at the same time that originate from several places, and come in many shapes and sizes. Numerous sources of income and the ability to scale up or down according to time and need has become a growing feature of our economy.

*To achieve the full potential of this emerging shift, policy makers must have a more heterogeneous, and less monolithic understanding of an evolving independent workforce, and begin shaping solutions that reflect this new reality of work.*

The first step towards improving conditions is for

solopreneurs to realise they are not alone. According to a 2015 press release from Eurostat, about 2.3 million enterprises were created in 2012 across the EU and most of them (71%) had no employees.<sup>1</sup> Solopreneurs represented 47% of all people employed in newly-born enterprises, making up the smallest of small businesses and the fastest growing segment of the EU labour market. Yet, to truly empower this new breed of entrepreneurs, we’ll need to reimagine and reinvent the way public policy views micro-businesses.

There is no such thing as the “typical solopreneur”; they are an extremely diverse group of people and range from consultants to journalists, IT experts, artists, translators, and sportspeople. They can also be found in a growing number of new professions in the healthcare, finance, social, and education sectors. They often work in partnership with each other and as complements to employees, driving growth and work creation in enterprises. Yet, they are not only a source of innovation, as being one’s own boss is also associated with greater professional satisfaction, job quality and improved work-life balance.

Despite all this, the significance of independent working is still not sufficiently taken into account in European legislation for micro-enterprises, as heard in an event organised by EFIP last December in the European Economic and Social Committee. European institutions should be bold enough to create more ambitious policies in support of solopreneurs. Solopreneurs should be defined as a unique subset of micro-enterprises with demonstrable value as economic agents in their own rights and proper recognition in official statistics. They need better regulation that specifically considers their needs, for instance by adapting the SME (Small and

Medium Enterprise) Test and the “Think Small First” approach in impact assessments to the one-person SMEs. Finally, they should be given access to social security programmes, training schemes, funding instruments and tax benefits that are designed for people with steady paychecks and not for solopreneurs with variable income streams.

*With these recommendations in mind, the forthcoming EU Directive on the Single-Member Companies<sup>2</sup> which will facilitate the provision of services for small business, is an opportunity to give fresh support to solopreneurs, above all those willing to establish and operate at cross-border level in the EU Internal Market.*

The opportunity to fuel a whole new wave of innovation and support an expanding solopreneurial population is now. The future of work is here, and it’s no longer just about creating jobs or matching supply and demand through online platforms. It’s about creating the right infrastructure for people to find multiple and better alternatives than a traditional employment and build a framework in which progressive solutions can leverage this structural change.

## References

1. European Commission – EUROSTAT. 9 out of 10 enterprises in the EU employed fewer than 10 persons – more than 1.6 million new solo-entrepreneurs in 2012. November 2015 [cited 2015 Dec 17]. Available from: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STAT-15-6109\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STAT-15-6109_en.htm)
2. European Commission. Proposal for a Directive of The European Parliament and of The Council on single-member private limited liability companies. April 2014 [cited 2015 Dec 17]. Available from: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX: S2014PC0212>

This article has previously appeared as a post on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-european-solopreneurs-creating-future-work-marco-torregrossaon> [2015 Dec 17].

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# How to negotiate the highest fees for your medical writing services

“Double your rate, double your practice,” says the theory.

By being more expensive, not only is the work you do more profitable, but you somehow also become more desirable to clients, and you are able to land many more projects than before.

Does this sound too good to be true?

Does it work in the ‘real world’? After all, why would clients pay twice as much as the going market rate?

Before you decide, consider this experience recounted by a freelance writer:

“I was listening to a webinar about marketing for freelancers. The coach was explaining how we tend to have a more rigid idea of the ‘market rate’, than our clients do, when in fact they may be willing to pay quite a lot more than we think. The only way to find out, he said, is to be bold. As a rule of thumb, you want about 20% of potential clients to turn you away because you are too expensive. If you are winning every single project you pitch for, it suggests that you could be undervaluing yourself.

“The coach urged us to double the price tag next time we were asked to quote for a project. To me this sounded like a ridiculous idea!

“Not long after that came the chance to quote for a year-long contract. It was a golden opportunity and I couldn’t afford to mess it up. Despite that, I found myself thinking about the webinar. I felt I owed it to myself to give it a try. So, in a moment of madness, I quoted twice the rate I had charged on my previous contract. When I heard the number come out of my mouth, it sounded absolutely outrageous!

“I couldn’t believe what happened next – they accepted without hesitation! And what’s more, not only did they say yes, they also renewed the contract the following year, and for quite a few years after that.”

This is a true story, although it’s fair to say that not everyone will have such a smooth ride. Sometimes it requires skilful negotiation to achieve the highest possible fees without losing the deal.

But the story does illustrate how it can pay off to take a bolder approach to charging fees.

If that has inspired you, here are some techniques to improve your chances of success ...

## 1. Focus on the things your clients really care about

In discussions about a potential project or contract, you are likely to have a deep understanding of the scientific context you’re going to

be writing about. But have you also considered the broader strategic context?

Often that is where your clients’ real problems lie, and that is where you can find additional opportunities to add value.

For example, one writer was asked to produce a video script to explain the mechanism of action of an opioid medication for the treatment of chronic pain. On the surface, what the client cared about was how to communicate the drug’s efficacy and safety in a way that could be understood by a wide audience, including patients.

However, by digging deeper during the conversation, the writer was able to discover the core challenge the brand was facing – primary care practitioners were reluctant to prescribe the medication because they associated it with a ‘street drug’. This was the broader strategic context which the clients hadn’t thought to share with the writer because they were focusing purely on the scientific messages that they wanted to include in the video.

When presented with the initial brief before being awarded the contract, the writer asked follow-up questions, such as “what other challenges are you facing?” This opened up a discussion around the strategic context, which inspired the writer to weave historical and social themes into the proposal, alongside the purely scientific material. This gave the clients confidence that the writer could produce work that was not only scientifically robust, but also closely aligned to the overall business goals.

It’s also worth remembering that the thing that your client most cares about might not be purely professional. Is he or she wearing a sophisticated looking running watch? Are you passionate about running yourself? If you find a match like that, then you have a prime opportunity to create a strong connection, and a strong connection paves the way for a successful negotiation on price!

## 2. Emphasise your scarcity

“Well, it certainly was a record for polyester”, remarked the auctioneer having just collected \$145,000 for John Travolta’s white suit from *Saturday Night Fever*.

The story is recounted by Dr Robert Cialdini, whose in-depth investigation into the psychology of sales and negotiation is captured in the international bestseller *Influence: science and practice*.

It shows the effect of scarcity on the human psyche. The suit was one-of-a-kind and the

bidders were so gripped by the fear of losing out on this scarce item that it completely clouded their judgment, becoming locked in a fierce bidding war that went beyond all rational levels.

Marketers capitalise on this effect, often using artificial ways of creating scarcity, such as creating waiting lists or limiting the availability of a product to build a frenzy of desire – hence why people are willing to camp overnight on the street outside the Apple store before the launch of the latest iPhone.

But as a freelancer you don’t have to fake scarcity. There are many attributes that can turn your writing services into a scarce resource. It certainly helps if you have researched your therapy area so deeply that very few people can match your knowledge on the subject. Do you have a PhD? Less than 2% of the population does, so if you’re one of them, your knowledge is a scarce resource already. Don’t forget to capitalise on that by charging accordingly!

But scarcity doesn’t only come from deep knowledge. It can also come from broad knowledge.

Broad knowledge allows you to combine different elements to create uniqueness. For example, can you write to a high standard in more than one language? Or could you do a creative scriptwriting course and then adapt the skills to write medical video scripts?

**Note:** Mix and match your skills to become a ‘cheeky scientist’. Find out more at [www.cheekyscientist.com](http://www.cheekyscientist.com)

The best option of all is to have knowledge that is both deep and broad – also known as being a ‘T-shaped’ freelancer.

In other words, the way to become a scarce resource is to focus on your points of difference. At the same time, it is important that your difference provides a solution to the problems that your clients need solving. Once you have identified, developed and refined your difference, don’t forget to tell clients why you are different, how they will benefit, and why that commands the higher fees that you wish to charge.

**Note:** A useful tool to help focus the mind on the client’s problem areas is the Value Proposition Canvas, which can be downloaded free of charge from [www.businessmodelgeneration.com/canvas/vpc](http://www.businessmodelgeneration.com/canvas/vpc)



### 3. Reverse the risk

Clients will often have hidden concerns that inhibit them from greenlighting a project. This could be anything from fear of being criticised internally for their decision, to perceptions of value, or even an irrational fear that freelancers might vanish into thin air in the middle of a project.

So it's very important to address these concerns early on in the negotiation. Matt Craven, who advises freelancers on CV and interview techniques offers the following advice:

During the initial interview or project pitch meeting there is usually a point during which the client asks "Do you have any questions?" Craven suggests you answer with: "Yes, is there anything that could prevent you from awarding me this project?"

**Note:** You can read more tips by Matt Craven at [www.ipse.co.uk/advice/winning-work/closing-sale-turning-interviews-client-pitches](http://www.ipse.co.uk/advice/winning-work/closing-sale-turning-interviews-client-pitches)

This is a direct approach, but it gives the client the opportunity to voice any concerns or objections. In turn this allows you to provide the relevant reasoning or evidence to show why the concerns are unfounded.

Another useful way to minimise the risk for the client is by crafting a strong guarantee. For example: "I charge 50% up-front and 50% upon delivery. As per my satisfaction guarantee, the

second half will only be payable if you feel that the value created by the work has exceeded your investment". This would make it easier for you to compete with another freelancer who charges half your fee.

### 4. Believe

Patrick Forsyth, author of *The Negotiator's Pocketbook*, writes: "There is one additional source of power, one of major significance: confidence. If others believe they are dealing with someone confident, competent, organised and efficient then they may be less certain of their own position. Confidence comes from preparation, a structured approach, knowledge, and belief. Convince yourself of your confidence and you will convince them that you are a power to be reckoned with. As the saying goes: 'If you can fake confidence, then everything else is easy!'"

This self-belief is what allows you to follow Forsyth's first rule of negotiating: aim high!

**Note:** IPSE Plus members can download *The Negotiator's Pocketbook* free of charge via [www.ipse.co.uk/academy/virtual-ashridge](http://www.ipse.co.uk/academy/virtual-ashridge)

### 5. Continue to invest in your visibility

The first four tips relate to the actual negotiation itself. This final one is more about the ongoing activities that will put you in a stronger position whenever you sit down at the negotiating table.

Daniel Priestley, author of *Key Person of Influence*, makes the point that in every single industry there is a select group who earn more and have much more influence than the vast majority of people in that industry.

What is their secret? According to Priestley one of the key things they have in common is that they publish content regularly, whether through books, articles, blog posts or any other medium.

As a writer, publishing content is clearly the main thing you do. But are you only publishing content commissioned by clients?

The opportunity lies in publishing your own material as well, to become known as a thought leader in your field. For example, if you have a PhD, how could you make the best use of all that research? Perhaps you can turn your thesis into a series of blog posts. Or are there any public speaking opportunities you could explore? Do any of your current or potential clients publish an in-house magazine – could you offer to submit articles, or even a regular column, to build your visibility within that company?

Building visibility is hard work. However, a study by Hinge Research Institute, suggests that it is an excellent investment.<sup>1</sup>

They surveyed 130 consultants and divided them into five levels. Those on level 1 in terms of visibility were recognised as experts by their clients and colleagues, but not well-known outside of their immediate circle. Those on level 5 were globally recognised 'gurus'. The difference in earning capacity was enormous – those on level 5 charged 14 times more than those on level 1.

So it's worth thinking creatively about all of the potential channels where you could demonstrate your expertise to your target audience. After all, in the digital age, the possibilities are endless, and if you only manage to shift from level 1 to level 2, that is still a big jump in earnings!

### Reference

1. Frederiksen, LW. Visible Expert Research Study: Management Consulting Edition. Hinge Research Institute, 2015.

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