



# Out on Our Own

## Editorial

Welcome readers,

Over the years of being a freelancer, the Out on Our Own editor, and chair of the Freelance Business Group, I have met many freelancers from various walks of life, with different experiences and journeys. Personally, I find those that I've met extremely hard working, driven, positive, and passionate about their careers.

In this issue, our author has all these qualities and more. Shaun W. Foley is a

freelancer turned businessman. In previous issues, we have had other freelancers explain their journeys of setting up a business, and this issue complements those but offers useful tips for those likeminded readers.

In only a few years, Shaun has gone from freelancer (which he still does) to also being director of his business. He summarises key aspects that he has learnt along the way and gives our readers essential advice on how to juggle freelance work, bringing in a steady salary and

launching a business. "You need to be passionate about the business you're setting up" he states. So, if you want to challenge your work life, have a business idea, and want to take that leap of faith to get it off the ground then read his journey and advice, I'm sure you'll be inspired.

Happy reading.

I wish everyone a healthy and happy start to 2021. Farewell 2020!

Laura A. Kehoe

## Setting up a business as a freelancer

I began freelance medical writing in 2017 after 5 years of medical writing at several agencies. During this time, I realised that I wanted to be a freelancer when I was constantly needing and searching for freelance support during what seemed like permanently busy periods. I also had access to the EMWA *Medical Writing* publication, through which the Out on Our Own section provided me with great advice on the requirements needed to be a freelance medical writer and the common challenges involved. Finally, I decided to take the leap of independence when my son was born, and I wanted to improve my work-life balance and spend more time at home.

Two busy years after I began freelancing, I launched my own business, Biome Professionals. In this article, I've shared my experiences and the challenges that I faced while freelancing and simultaneously running a separate business.

### Initial planning for a new business

Refining your idea for a new business is an important step before investing many further hours into the idea. As a freelancer, you are the product, and even the most self-critical among us can speak positively about ourselves! But as a business owner, you need to be able to promote and advertise your services or product. Thoroughly consider the benefit that your product or service provides and refine your idea into a 30-second elevator pitch in which you can convey

your idea clearly and passionately.

Depending on the product or service, new businesses can be an expensive and financially risky venture. Therefore, careful financial planning is a key consideration for launching a new business. Will you be able to cover the expenses of launching and running the business yourself or will you need the help of a partner? If you do require investment from a partner, have you considered how this investment will be repaid? Being an online service, my business had minimal set up costs which were largely derived from profits from freelancing, and so there was no need for borrowing or further investment.

### Developing and running your new business

The freelance medical writers among us will appreciate the effort and input required to transition from an employee to going solo as a freelancer. In addition to freelancing, launching a new business is a huge time commitment, so prepare to invest maximum effort! Developing and running your new business with a partner will allow the workload to be split across multiple people. My wife and I designed and developed our new business, with some fantastic help from my own freelance clients, which minimised burnout while also performing our simultaneous day jobs. However, a business partner re-introduces something that many freelancers wanted to move away from in the first place: working with others! Therefore, it is important

that roles and responsibilities are discussed and that you have a trusting relationship.

An important point to consider is whether you will continue freelance medical writing at the same time as running your separate business. As every freelancer knows, freelancing is epitomised by feast or famine. One month we are worrying about where our next job will come from, and the next we are wishing for more hours

### Summary box

- **Refine your idea:** Thoroughly critique whether your product or service provides a benefit. Be able to convey your idea clearly and passionately.
- **Setting up:** Consider whether you will run your new business alone or with a partner, and how you will finance your new business.
- **Maximum effort:** Launching a business is a huge commitment, so prepare to work on your idea on weekends and evenings if you need to continue freelancing during "office hours".
- **Network, network, network:** Create accounts for your business on social media and post relevant content regularly to communicate with your customers and grow your business.



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in the day to finish our work. If you need to continue freelancing during your feast periods to keep your clients happy, be prepared to develop and run your business on weekends and

evenings. I've been extremely fortunate to have several long-term clients as a freelancer, but this meant that developing my business was done entirely at evenings and weekends, and running

my business is usually done during quieter periods or lunchtimes.

### Growing your business and communicating with customers

Think how you will identify and communicate with your customers and grow your business. Depending on your business idea, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are all invaluable social media platforms that can be used to launch and grow your business. Find out which social media platform is best suited for your business and create an account (they are usually free). Posting regularly, at least a few times a week, will help with growing your business and keeping in touch with customers. I do almost all of my advertising and communication on LinkedIn. As an example, I update the company's LinkedIn page with content related to freelancing in medical communications which I hope will be of interest to our followers. I also ran a relatively inexpensive targeted advertising campaign on LinkedIn last year, in which I was able to specify that the content was seen only by freelancers, recruiters, and medical communications agency staff who may be involved in recruiting freelancers.

### Summary

In summary, pick a business that you are passionate about and go for it! I found it very satisfying to completely create something from scratch and to work on Biome Professionals as a break from the day-to-day of freelancing and I aim to continue to do both in the long-term.

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 November 4-6, 2021  
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