

Conversation with

Mighty Marketer Genevieve J. Long, PhD

Genevieve J. Long, PhD, PC

Freelance writer for health care and higher education since 2002

[Website](#)

[LinkedIn profile](#)



Tell us about your work.

I write and edit patient education and consumer health materials. My passions are health literacy and plain language, and I'm constantly studying both so I can do my job better. I write for print and the web, and do some feature writing in health care and higher education. I also write marketing materials, such as newsletters, referral guides, and annual reports, for physicians and other providers.

How did you get into freelancing?

I always wanted to be a freelance writer. When I started in medical writing, I negotiated slightly less than full time so I could start a part-time freelance business with my employer's blessing. I took a few clients, but also enjoyed my in-house work. I started as a manuscript editor because academic manuscripts were what I knew best at the time, but also learned to write marketing materials, sat on the university's branding committee, and wrote plain-language materials for patients. When my position was eliminated in the recession, I became a full-time freelancer and haven't looked back.

How have you marketed your freelance business?

What's worked best for you?

Word of mouth is the best marketing, but you have to earn it. Doing great work, being easy to work with, and loving what you do make the difference. I'll never forget the time I met someone at a client site who said, "It's great to meet the writer with the impeccable reputation." I try to live up to his comment every day.

Setting up a professional shop from the start was a great idea. My [website](#) has changed, but it's been around since I started out part-time. I also got business cards immediately. Professional marketing materials tell you and your prospective clients that you're serious about your business.

The AMWA Freelance Directory has brought me wonderful clients. People using a professional association directory are usually serious about finding the right person, in my opinion. My listing has paid for itself many times over.

It's easier to keep a current client than go out and get a new one, and if your current clients are happy, they will tell others. So I send holiday cards, annual gifts, thank-you notes, and postcards to keep in touch. If I see a client's ad around town, I snap a photo and send it to them. Your clients love to feel you're part of their team and you're thinking of them.

“It's easier to keep a current client than go out and get a new one and if your current clients are happy, they will tell others.”

What hasn't worked well for you in marketing your business?

Cold calls and direct mail haven't worked terribly well. I've gotten a few meetings and a little work, but in almost every case, the call or mailing hasn't been cold – it's been a company where the manager or administrator knows someone who knows me.

When I first went full-time, I did direct mail to AMWA members who worked at organizations I wanted to work for. I hired someone to create a database and mailed more than 500 pieces with no results beyond a few kind emails. Other medical writers have sent me work and vice versa, but there's always been a relationship in place first.

How has your marketing changed as your business grew?

It's become more active. I participate more in LinkedIn discussions, I'm planning to add new images to my website and create some videos, and I'm considering a new approach to direct mail, following tips in *The Mighty Marketer*.

What are your top 3 marketing tips for a NEW freelancer?

- 1. Run a professional shop from the start.** Have a website, business cards, LinkedIn profile, and everything else *The Mighty Marketer* recommends. I can't tell you how many times I've gone to a conference, met someone who says they're new in the business, asked for a card, and heard, "I don't have cards yet, I'm just starting out." You're always marketing yourself just by talking to people, so set up your business appropriately before you go out there.
- 2. Do great work.** Know what you do well and start with that. Don't try to be all things to all clients. Deliver a quality product and never, ever, be late or make excuses, because clients remember. Freelancers have a reputation for being flaky and working in their pajamas, and you have to counteract that.

“Know what you do well and start with that. Don't try to be all things to all clients.”

3. **Join your professional association and get involved.** Established freelancers will help you, especially in the medical writing profession, and you will learn a lot by hanging around them. If you do great work, you'll also receive referrals or overflow work.

What are your top 3 marketing tips for more experienced freelancers who are still building their businesses?

1. **Love what you do.** It may sound a bit New Age, but if you don't do it with love, you should consider switching professions or taking a serious vacation. When I write patient education, I think about the patient or family member reading it and I write to them. When I write marketing materials, I think about the physicians who want to get the word out about their research and the busy marketing manager who hired me to find the right words. If you care about the work you're doing, it shows, and it will market your business for you.
2. **Try different things, don't let the standbys slip, and never quit marketing.** Some marketing tactics work better in different areas of the country. I don't do a lot of in-person networking with clients from the South and East, but my AMWA freelance directory profile and word of mouth from clients in those regions bring me work. Here in the Northwest, AMWA is not particularly well known, we have fewer hospitals and health centers, and the health and business communities are relatively small, so relationships rule.

Update your marketing basics – website, business cards, LinkedIn, and AMWA or other professional directory profiles – regularly, but also try different things to see what works. For example, I'm planning to try direct mail again.

3. **Show clients you're thinking of them.** If you get great service from a doctor at their hospital, email them to say so. Thank them every time you finish an assignment. Vary your email sign-offs – I usually write "Best," but also like "Thank you, as always." When I send invoices, I write, "Thanks so much for thinking of me for this assignment." Be authentic and heartfelt – treat a client as you would treat a friend.

Brought to You by The Mighty Marketer

Discover the secrets to making more money as a freelancer through The Mighty Marketer's conversations and other free resources, free e-zine Spark!, and books.

[Sign up for Spark!](#)

[Visit The Mighty Marketer](#)

Copyright © 2015 The Mighty Marketer



Curated by professional editors, The Conversation offers informed commentary and debate on the issues affecting our world. Plus a Plain English guide to the latest developments and discoveries from the university and research sector. Find conversation stock images in HD and millions of other royalty-free stock photos, illustrations and vectors in the Shutterstock collection. Thousands of new, high-quality pictures added every day. From Middle English conversacioun, from French conversation, from Latin conversātiōnem, accusative singular of conversātiō (â€œconversationâ€), from conversor (â€œabide, keep company withâ€). (Received Pronunciation) IPA(key): /kŋvɜːsətʃən/, [kŋvɜːsətʃn]. (General American) IPA(key): /kŋvɜːsətʃn/, [kŋvɜːsətʃn]. Rhymes: -ɜːsətʃn. conversation (countable and uncountable, plural conversations). Conversation is interactive communication between two or more people. The development of conversational skills and etiquette is an important part of socialization. The development of conversational skills in a new language is a frequent focus of language teaching and learning. Conversation analysis is a branch of sociology which studies the structure and organization of human interaction, with a more specific focus on conversational interaction. Conversation definition: If you have a conversation with someone, you talk with them, usually in an informal | Meaning, pronunciation, translations and examples. He's a talkative guy, and I struck up a conversation with him. [+ with]. I waited for her to finish a telephone conversation. Synonyms: talk, exchange, discussion, dialogue More Synonyms of conversation. 2. See in conversation. 3. See make conversation. COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers.