

## The Wonderful World of Subcontracting

Presented by Joanne McAndrews, PhD & Ruth Thaler-Carter

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### **The basics of subcontracting (Ruth) — 2-layer process/relationship**

One entity (contractor or freelancer) provides the work, and the other (subcontractor) performs it. Contractor/Freelancer finds clients, accepts projects, and finds and makes arrangements with subcontractors.

### **Benefits to the entity providing the work (Joanne)**

- Can accept more and different projects, offer different/additional services
- Can offload excess work while keeping regular clients
- Creates a passive income stream
- Has potential to expand business
- Provides someone to check each other's work
- Increases potential to sell the business at retirement

### **Benefits to the subcontractor (Ruth)**

- Work comes to you — don't have to do queries or searches
- Can be a way to develop new skills
- Can be a side hustle/way or way to test the waters if you are thinking about getting into freelancing or new type of work
- Can work even if have disabilities

### **Drawbacks to the entity providing the work (Joanne)**

- Your reputation is on the line — if subcontractors don't do well, it reflects on you
- You have to spend time/effort on training, supervising/performing quality control
- Not all clients allow subcontracting — either because of their rules (especially government agencies) or their personal preference for you as the person doing their work
- Cash management — needs funds in hand to pay your subcontractor when the work is done even if your client is slow in paying; be sure to explain if you can't pay subcontractor until you get paid; ad agencies notorious for making contractors/subcontractors wait

### **Drawbacks to the subcontractor (Ruth)**

- Unable to build your own network of clients
- Can't add projects to your portfolio
- Often can't interact directly with client
- Can't use client for testimonials
- Deadlines can be unreasonable
- Potentially lower pay — contractor pays from what they receive

### **The nature of the process (Ruth)**

Works best when expectations and boundaries are clear:

- Subcontractor is someone you know and whose experience/skills are familiar  
Develop skills test

Check references!

Provide style guides

Develop contract/Checklist

Encourage communication about potential issues

- Subcontractor knows when payment will arrive
- Deadlines are before work due to client
- Client contact is confidential — subcontractor agrees not to pitch directly

### **Finding each other**

- Professional organizations (i.e., AMWA, TechWrite STL, NAIWE, EFA, ACES, Editors Canada, STC, CIEP, IPED, etc.)
- Colleagues
- LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.

### **References/resources**

<https://blog.amwa.org/when-and-how-to-subcontract-work-as-a-freelance-medical-writer>

<https://journal.emwa.org/trends-in-medical-writing/subcontracting-not-for-the-faint-of-heart/>

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