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://americaneditor.wordpress.com/2023/05/26/on-the-basics-putting-it-in-writing/