



CASE STUDY

Focusing on Client Needs

Debbie (Deborah) Anderson, PhD

Freelance medical writer and instructional designer
since 2012

Debbie Anderson wanted to make sure that her freelance business continued to grow. The freelance medical writer and instructional designer also wanted to make more money and work with a broader range of clients.

When Debbie heard about the online course **Finding the Freelance Clients You Deserve**, she wasn't sure that it was right for her. "I had been actively freelancing for five years so I wasn't sure if it would be relevant," she says.

In 2016, Debbie decided to take the course anyway—and made more money that year than she ever had before. "2016 was awesome. It was by far the best year I have ever had freelancing. I'm doing well in 2017 and I've consistently made my numbers (usually double what I want)."

Attracting Clients by Focusing on their Needs

As an experienced freelancer who knew the importance of marketing, Debbie was already doing many of the things covered in the course. She had a great logo, and a LinkedIn profile and a website. She had a prospect list, and was marketing directly to those prospects.

But Debbie's marketing wasn't as effective as it could have been. "I learned to focus on the perspective of clients and what they need, and not what I have. This was really important and a new way to look at things," she says. Focusing on client needs and how freelancers can meet those needs is the key to effective marketing.

Developing a Client-Focused, Compelling Online Presence

Through the coaching, Debbie learned how she could improve her online presence, and got specific recommendations for doing this. "I thought my LinkedIn profile and website were in good shape, but after Lori's review, I saw the improvements I needed to make," she says. "I was grateful for the recommendations."

Debbie revamped her LinkedIn profile and website, making both more client-focused and more compelling. She also revamped her profile in the American Medical Writers Association's Freelance Directory.

“I have gotten more hits off my LinkedIn page, which have turned into paying jobs,” says Debbie. Some clients mentioned visiting her website, which is listed on her LinkedIn profile, before deciding to contact her.

Expanding Clients and Projects

Using what she learned in the course, Debbie has also reached out to new clients and increased the types of projects she does for current clients. Through the course’s client- focused technique for direct email, she is getting more responses from prospects than she had in the past, when she sent out generic emails. “I have gotten a few bites from the direct emails but nothing that has materialized into jobs. I keep following up every now and then, because I know I need to be persistent,” she says.

Following up with prospects regularly is crucial—because clients rarely need a freelancer when we first contact them. As Debbie learned in the course, it often takes a year or more of polite, persistent follow-up before a client hires a freelancer. By staying in touch with prospects, Debbie is ensuring that when they do need a freelancer, they’ll think of her first.

Debbie also changed how she charges for her work, using mostly project instead of hourly fees. This wasn’t part of the course, but it’s helped her increase her income.

Building a Strong Network

By getting more actively involved with her professional associations, Debbie is building her network of prospects and freelance colleagues. She was the speaker at a 2017 dinner meeting of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association and will be presenting at the association’s 2017 annual conference. “I present on medical writing and instructional design, which is an up and coming field, and something I have a lot of experience in,” she says. Debbie has also volunteered for the Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association.

Going After Freelance Success

Freelancers like Debbie who succeed aren’t luckier or smarter than freelancers who struggle. But they are persistent and willing to put in the work that’s necessary to build a successful freelance business.

“Nothing will fall in your lap. If you want something, you have to go out and get it,” says Debbie. When Debbie started her freelance business, she spent up to eight hours a day searching for prospects and reaching out to them. “I put together lists of potential companies, searched on LinkedIn for the right person, and contacted them, lots of them...but it paid off. I still have my ever-growing list of potential clients and make sure to tap into that for marketing. If I just sat around waiting, nothing would have happened. If you want something, you need to work for it and continue to work for it.”

It’s also important to move out of your comfort zone and explore different types of freelance opportunities. “Working freelance has given me the opportunity to try new things with both client and writing types,” says Debbie. Working on videos and covering conferences, for

example, are two types of work Debbie had never done before launching her freelance

business.

About Debbie's Freelance Business

Debbie develops clear, concise, compelling medical education content to teach and engage healthcare professionals, sales representatives, managed care directors, and corporate employees.

With a master's degree in biomedical writing and a PhD in instructional design, she helps medical education companies reach their potential by enhancing their medical education products and services.

Learn More About Debbie's Freelance Business

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