



Marketing for Freelance Medical Writers and Editors: What Works Best

Results of the 2015 Marketing Survey for
Freelance Medical Writers and Editors



Executive Summary

Great marketing is a key part of every successful freelance medical writing or editing business.

The Marketing Survey for Freelance Medical Writers and Editors, fielded from July 13 to August 12, 2015, asked freelance medical writers and editors how they feel about marketing, what works best for them in marketing their businesses, what they'd like to learn about, and more.

I thank the 77 freelance medical writers and editors who took the survey and shared their perspectives on and experiences with marketing their businesses.¹ They're members of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA), members of LinkedIn groups related to medical writing and editing, and colleagues of other freelance medical writers and editors who took the survey.

Key Findings

Nearly 1/3 of freelance medical writers and editors (28%) “strongly dislike” or “dislike” marketing their freelance businesses. About another third of freelancers (34%) “like” or “love” marketing. The other freelancers (37.3%) are “neutral” about marketing.

Marketing is the “biggest challenge” or “one of the major challenges” for 53% of freelancers. 42% of freelancers said marketing is “somewhat of a challenge” or a “minor challenge.”

“Finding time for marketing” is the biggest marketing challenge for 36% of freelance medical writers and editors. Other top marketing challenges are:

- “Knowing how to market”: 29% of freelancers.
- “Getting motivated to market”: 23% of freelancers.

Continued

¹ Not all freelancers answered every question so some results do not add up to 77.

Key Findings (Continued)

Word of mouth (including referrals) is by far the best marketing tool for freelance medical writers and editors (47% of freelancers). Other top marketing tools are:

- LinkedIn: #1 for 16% of freelancers
- The AMWA Freelance Directory: #1 for 10% of freelancers.

LinkedIn is the most common and important business social network:

- 99% of freelance medical writers and editors use LinkedIn.
- 65% said LinkedIn is “important” or “very important” in marketing their businesses.

Twitter was the 2nd most common business social network, used by 31% of freelancers. But its highest rating, by 12% of freelancers, was “important.”

50% of freelance medical writers and editors said AMWA is “important” or “very important” in getting new clients. The remainder were evenly split between saying AMWA was “somewhat important” or “not important.”

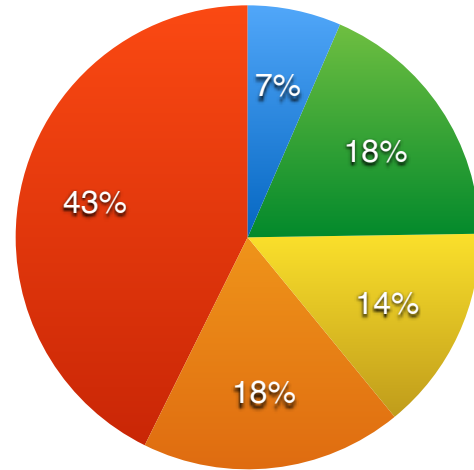
The top marketing topics freelance medical writers and editors want to learn more about are:

1. Website (31% of freelancers)
2. Direct email and mail (27% of freelancers)
3. LinkedIn (13% of freelancers)
4. Traditional networking (13% of freelancers)

Acknowledgement: Much thanks to freelance medical writer Jennifer Minarcik, MS, for her help in developing the survey and this report.

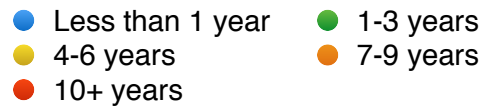
Survey Participants

43% of the 77 freelance medical writers and editors who took the survey are seasoned freelancers with 10 or more years of experience. 32% of the freelancers surveyed have 4-9 years of experience and 25% have 3 or less years of freelance experience.



The Numbers

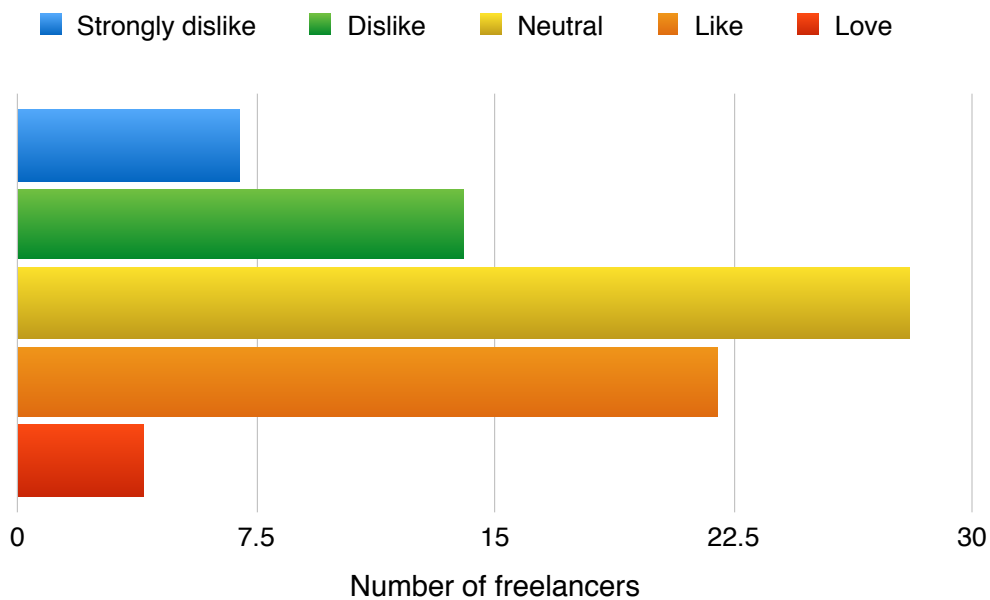
< 1 year	5
1-3 years	14
4-6 years	11
7-9 years	14
10+ years	33



How Freelancers Feel About Marketing

28% of freelance medical writers and editors “strongly dislike” or “dislike” marketing their freelance business (9.3% or 7 freelancers “strongly dislike” marketing and 19% or 14 freelancers “dislike” marketing).

Another 37.3% of freelancers (28) are neutral about marketing. 29.3% of freelancers (22) like marketing, and 5.3% of freelancers (4) love marketing.



Marketing and Other Freelance Challenges

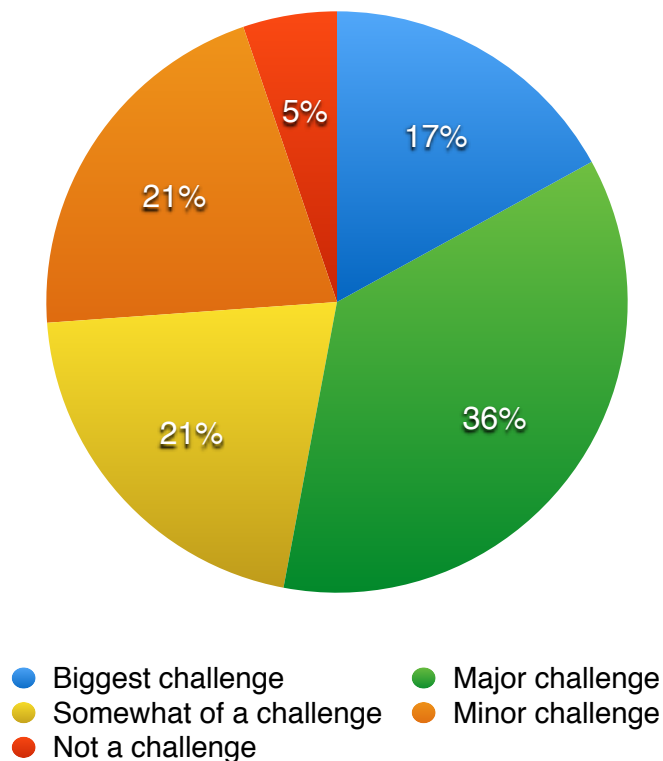
Of all of the challenges in freelancing, about half of all freelance medical writers and editors (53%) rated marketing as the “biggest challenge” or “one of the major challenges”:

- “Biggest challenge”:
 - 13 freelancers
- “One of the major challenges”:
 - 26 freelancers.

For 42% of freelancers, marketing is “somewhat of a challenge” or a “minor challenge”:

- “Somewhat of a challenge”:
 - 16 freelancers
- “Minor challenge”:
 - 16 freelancers.

5% of freelancers (4) said that marketing is “not a challenge.”



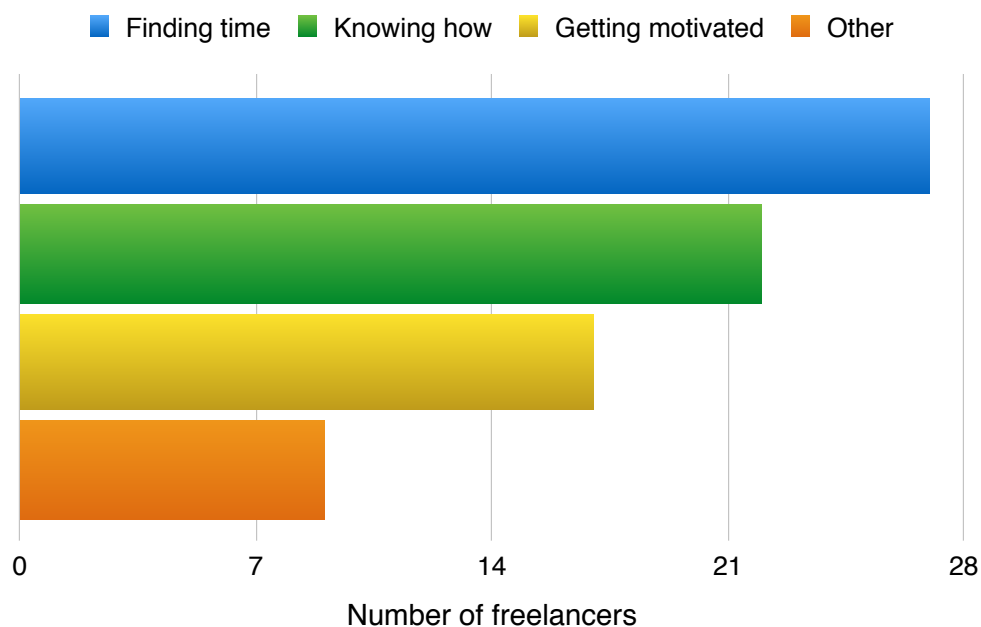
Biggest Marketing Challenge

“Finding time for marketing” is the biggest marketing challenge for 36% of freelance medical writers and editors (27).

“Knowing how to market” their business was the biggest challenge for 29% of freelancers (22).

“Getting motivated to market” was the biggest challenge for 23% of freelancers (17).

No freelancers selected “finding money for marketing” as the biggest challenge.



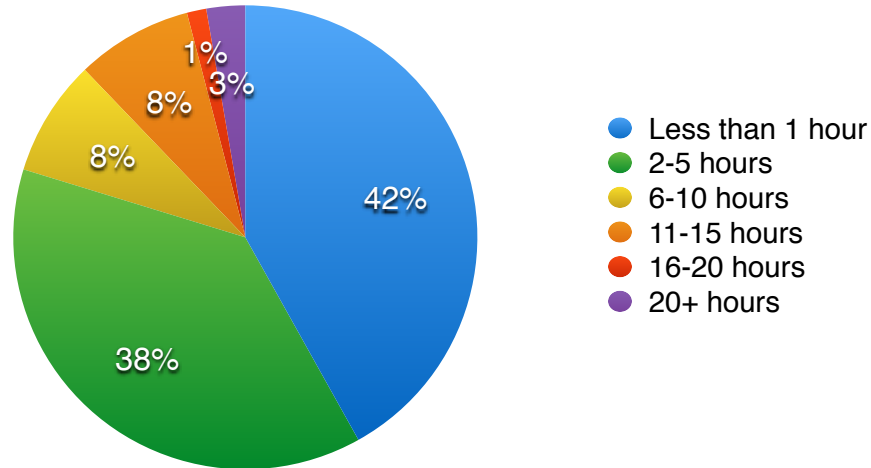
Other Marketing Challenges

12% of freelancers (9) selected “other” as the biggest marketing challenge. The most common “other” marketing challenges were:

- Balancing marketing with being able to take on new work without being overwhelmed
- Disliking or being uncomfortable selling their services
- Marketing consistently.

Time Spent on Marketing Each Month

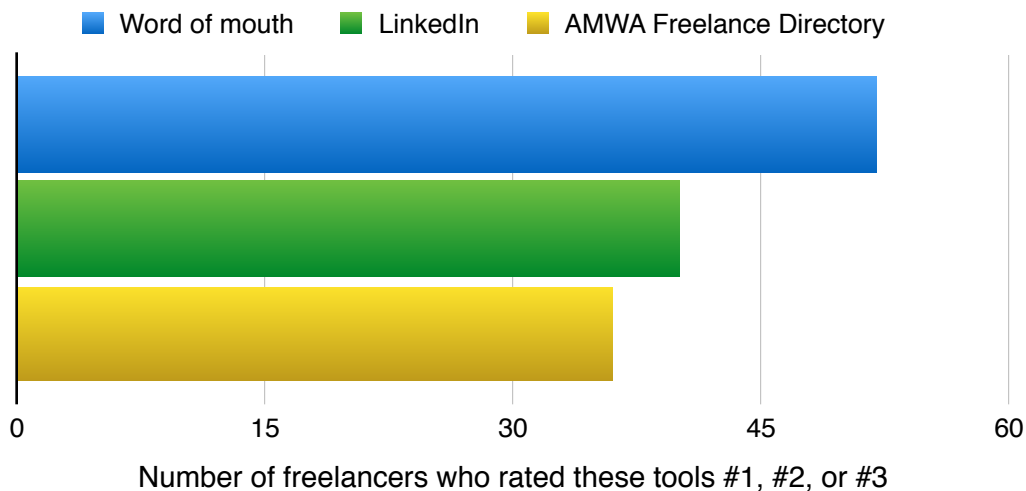
80% of freelance medical writers and editors spend 5 hours a month or less on marketing their businesses (42% or 31 freelancers spend less than 1 hour and 38% or 28 freelancers spend 2-5 hours). Only 3% of freelancers (2) spend 20 or more hours a month on marketing.



Best Marketing Tools for Getting New Clients

The top 3 marketing tools for freelance medical writers and editors are:

1. Word of mouth (including referrals)
2. LinkedIn
3. AMWA Freelance Directory.



Top 3 Marketing Tools

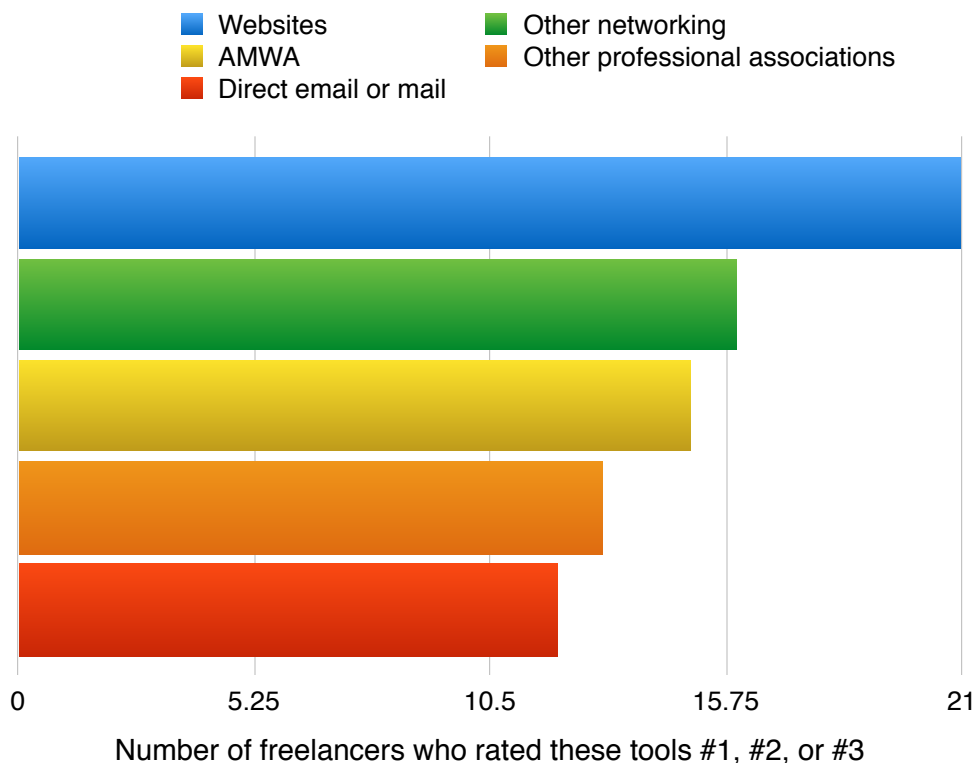
- Word of mouth was the #1 marketing tool for 47% of freelance medical writers and editors (34).
- LinkedIn was the #1 marketing tool for 16% of freelancers (12).
- The AMWA Freelance Directory was the #1 marketing tool for 10% of freelancers (7).

Other Good Marketing Tools

Freelance medical writers and editors also rated their websites, other networking (outside of AMWA and other professional associations), and AMWA highly for helping them get new clients.

After these tools, freelancers rated professional associations other than AMWA and direct email or mail as the best marketing tools.

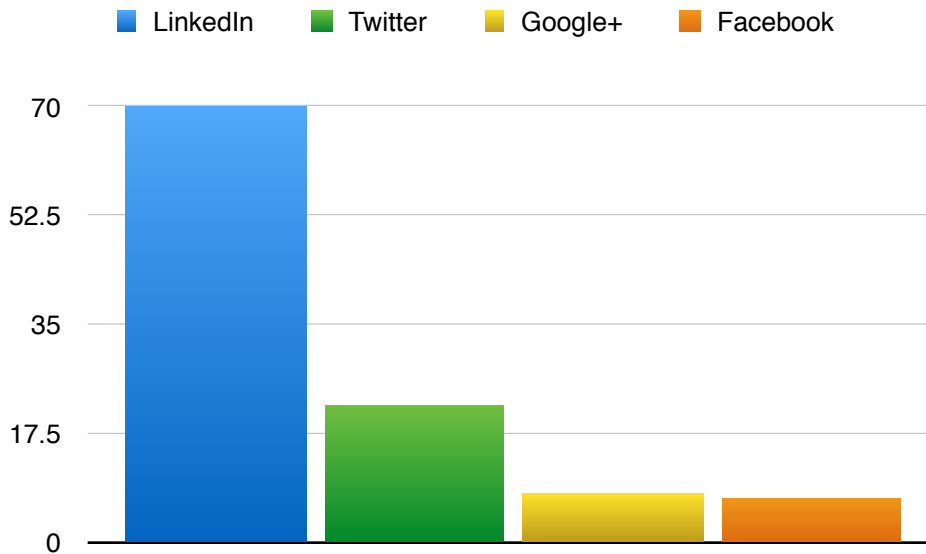
The least effective marketing tools were social networking other than Linked In and email newsletters.



Business Social Networks

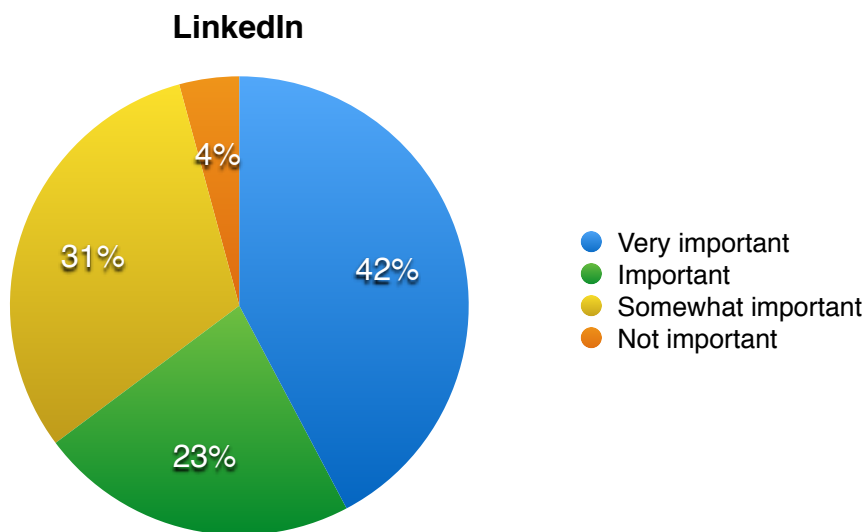
Social Networks Used

LinkedIn, used by 99% of freelance medical writers and editors, is by far the most common social network (70 freelancers). 31% of freelancers use Twitter (22 freelancers). 11% of freelancers use Google+ and 10% use Facebook (8 and 7 freelancers, respectively).



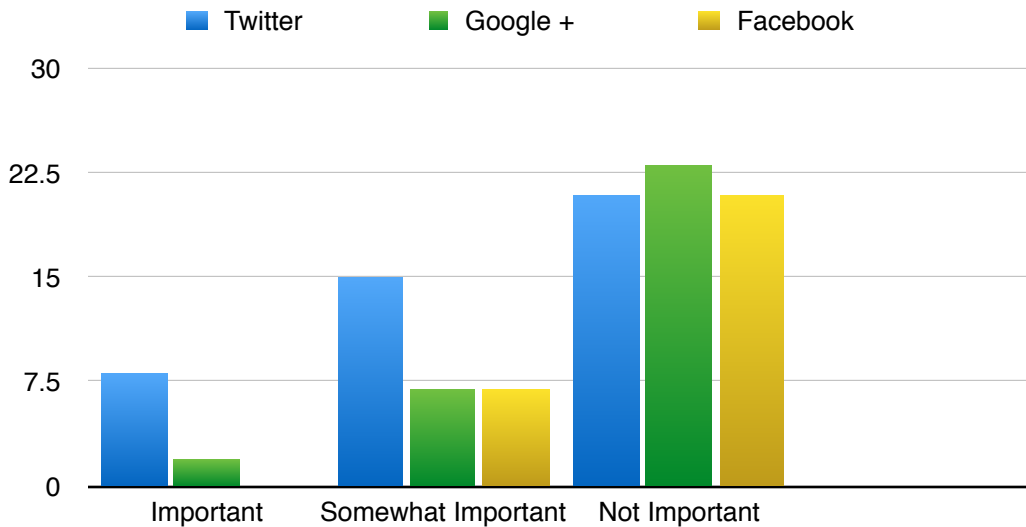
Importance of Social Networks for Business

In marketing a freelance medical writing or editing business, LinkedIn is the most important social network, with 65% of freelancers rating it “important” or “very important” (23% or 16 freelancers rated LinkedIn as “important” and 42% or 29 freelancers rated it as “very important”).



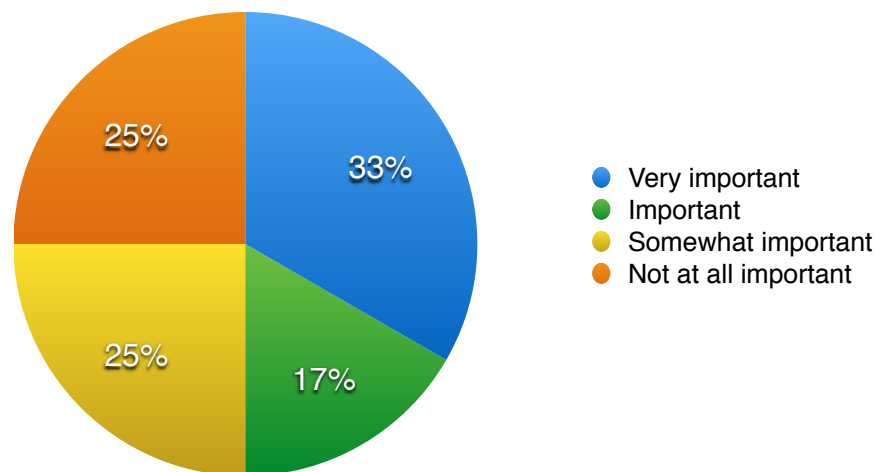
No freelancers rated Twitter, Google+, or Facebook as “very important” in marketing their business. Twitter was the next most important social network, with 12% of freelancers (8) rating it as “important” and 23% of freelancers (15) rating it as “somewhat important.”

Google+ is “important” for 3% of freelancers (2) and “somewhat important” for 12% of freelancers (7). Facebook is “somewhat important” for 12% of freelancers (7).



Role of AMWA in Marketing

Half of freelance medical writers and editors use said that AMWA is “very important” or “important” in getting new clients (33% of freelancers or 24 said AMWA is “very important” and 17% of freelancers or 12 said AMWA is “important”). The rest of the freelancers were evenly split between saying AMWA is “somewhat important” or “not at all important” (25% of freelancers or 18 in each category).



What Freelancers Want to Learn More About

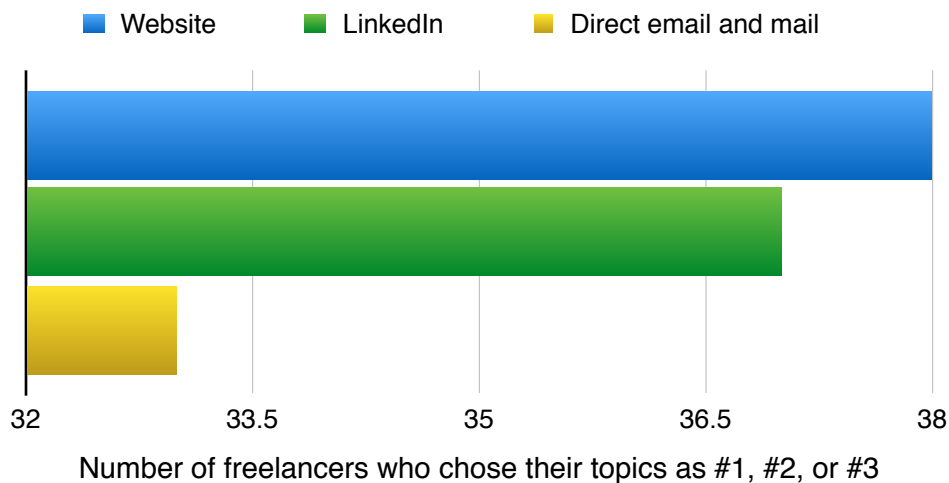
Top Marketing Topics

The marketing topics that freelance medical writers and editors chose as their #1 topic to learn more about are:

1. Website
2. Direct email and direct mail
3. LinkedIn
4. Traditional networking.

More freelancers chose websites as what they most want to learn about than any other topic (31% of freelancers or 21). For 27% of freelancers (18), the #1 topic to learn more about is direct email and mail. LinkedIn and traditional networking were both rated the #1 topic to learn more about by 13% of freelancers (9).

When choosing their top 3 marketing topics to learn more about, freelancers rated direct email and mail highest, followed by website and LinkedIn.



Other Topics Freelancers Want to Learn About

30 freelancers commented about other marketing topics they would like to learn more about. The most common other topics mentioned are:

- How to identify prospects (4 freelancers)
- What works best in marketing a freelance medical writing or editing business? (3 freelancers)
- How to find time for marketing (3 freelancers)
- How to approach prospects without a personal connection (2 freelancers).

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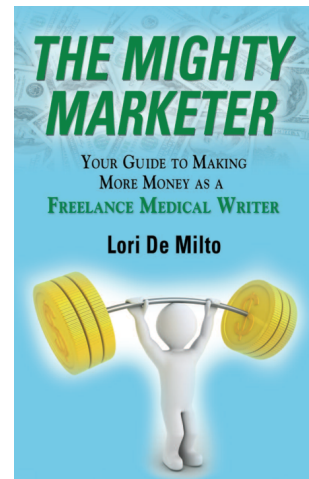
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