



EPISODE 176 How Having A Special Needs Child Led To a Great Career With Flexibility

With guest Dr. Adria Schmedthorst

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AS: “Doctors and healthcare writing. It's just a perfect fit to be able to understand what needs to be brought out in marketing writing in order to get someone to take that action. Because when a healthcare company is approaching a doctor, the doctor knows exactly what they're looking for.”

HF: Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master-certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their careers, whether in medicine, a nonclinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So, pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Hey there and welcome back to the Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. I'm your host Heather Fork, and you're listening to episode number 176. One of the top requests I get from physicians when they're at the crossroads is, “How can I find work that gives me more flexibility?” As we know, clinical practice is the epitome of inflexibility. You need to show up and be there for your patients. Canceling and rescheduling even when clinic day is a big deal. The days are long and often don't give you the opportunity to pick up your kids, attend their activities, or do something for yourself such as eat lunch or get a

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little exercise in. These are normal things to want to have. This is not asking for the moon or being selfish.

Our special guest today was working 50 to 60 hours in her practice. At the same time, she had a young adopted child with some special needs who needed her to be home more. I'll let her tell the story of how she found a wonderful solution to this problem as a copywriter. It took a lot of persistence for her to get started, but fast forward to today, she has a very successful business doing copywriting in healthcare and other areas. In a nutshell, copywriting is writing that compels the reader to take a specific action, such as signing up for a newsletter, making a purchase or donation, or reaching out to a business. Healthcare copywriting is a very untapped area for physicians and it's something we don't hear very much about.

I'm very eager to welcome our guest, Dr. Adria Schmedthorst, to help us learn more about this exciting niche. Dr. Schmedthorst is a chiropractor who transitioned into copywriting 13 years ago. She and her husband, who is also a copywriter, are co-founders of their business AMS COPY.

In just a minute, we will be diving into a lot of great details about copywriting, how it is different from medical writing, and why this is a great area for physicians who want to use their writing skills, have more flexibility, and earn an income. We'll hear the steps Adria took to get started, the types of clients she works with, what the compensation is like, and her thoughts about how AI is factoring in. She also has a great resource to recommend to any of you who want to further explore this area. It is my true honor and pleasure to welcome Dr. Adria Schmedthorst to the podcast. Hi Adria. Welcome.

AS: Hi Heather. Thank you for having me on.

HF: I was so excited to find you and you said "yes" right away. Was it surprising to you that someone was reaching out to have you be on the podcast?



AS: It was in a way since I've never been on a podcast before. However, that was also exciting and I understand how important it is these days for physicians to be able to find a different source of income as well because so many are looking to exit right now and gain the flexibility like you were talking about because that's what I was looking for.

HF: Exactly. And when I mentioned copywriting to my clients, they get a physical look. As we often think of when you copyright something, you're protecting it for yourself. And so, copywriting is kind of confusing and I really didn't say much about it in the intro. Would you like to start us off with a more descriptive idea that people can really understand what is copywriting?

AS: Yeah, sure. A lot of people think that. When they hear copywriting they think of that little C that you see in a book, the copyright for the book. But that's not what copywriting is at all. Copywriting is actually more writing for marketing. And so, you work with marketing divisions of the company or CEOs, but you do their marketing writing, whether it's a brochure, or their website copy. It can be a newsletter, it can be even blog posts and articles. But no matter what it is, the focus of copywriting is to get customers to take some sort of action with the company, whether it be an in-between action, such as just signing up for a newsletter or it be the end action of purchasing.

HF: Yeah. It's funny because I didn't realize that when I had my business that I was writing a weekly blog and sending out emails to people who were on my newsletter. And also when I created the content for my website that was copywriting.

AS: Yes, exactly.

HF: Yeah. I love this area because it sounds like you can put in more creativity to the type of writing that you're doing and it really calls for someone who can understand their client and their client's audience.



AS: Very much. And that's a great thing to pull out because especially when you're talking about doctors and healthcare writing, it's just a perfect fit because when a healthcare company is approaching a doctor, the doctor knows exactly what they're looking for. It's a perfect fit in order to be able to understand what needs to be brought out in marketing writing in order to get someone to take that action.

HF: Exactly. And it's funny because having done two websites myself and also working with physicians who are starting their own businesses, it's not that easy to write website content. I remember the hours and hours I put into what you see now on my website. There was so much more content that I had and I really had to distill it down and figure out what to say, what not to say, how to say it. And I'm telling you, if I could have hired a copywriter who could have done it for me, I would've.

AS: A lot more efficiently.

HF: Yes, yes. It was challenging.

AS: Yeah, it is. It's a whole different type of writing and you have to think in a completely different way when you're doing it.

HF: We're going to dive into more of these details about copywriting but first I'd love to hear your story about when you were really busy as a chiropractor and really what was going on and how you made this transition, which is a big change.

AS: Yes, it was actually a huge change. I had been in my practice for 10 years when we adopted our daughter from South Korea. And my practice was wonderful. It was incredibly busy and I loved my patients, but I was working, you already mentioned 50 to 60 hours a week, sometimes even more. And when we brought our daughter home from South Korea, she had a brain injury at birth. And so, there were a lot of doctor's appointments and she needed me as much as possible at home and I needed to be with



her for the bonding experience that must happen with an adopted child in order for the future to be what you want it to be.

And I started really considering “How can I do this?” I started cutting back my days and my practice first, hiring other doctors to take my place. It was always stressful because even when you hire someone else to take your place, constantly, your mind is there and you're still hand shuffling calls and paperwork and all those things that go into it.

I finally just made the decision that I was going to sell my practice and do something else. I was going to do something that let me be at home when I needed to be at home and do the things I needed to do with my child. When I started thinking about it and researching, I was immediately drawn to writing because I had always loved to write. My dad actually wrote two novels when I was growing up and I guess I got that love of writing from him and I just thought that that was the portion where I could actually make a difference and do something.

And when I learned about copywriting, I realized that I didn't have to write a whole novel and then try to get it published. I could actually write for companies on a daily basis and make a really good living. And so, that's where it led me. And when I considered it, I thought some of the best advice I ever received was to start out writing in a very specific niche. Don't just go broad and say “I write in everything.” Because when you're starting out, you don't have any samples, you don't have anything to show people of what you've done. You need instead to have the experience to tell them that you can do it. And so, since my experience was in healthcare, I decided that that would be my first niche. That's where I would start out and plant my flag was to write for healthcare companies.

HF: That makes a lot of sense and I think you articulated something really important is if you're going to do writing, it's really helpful to love to write and have it be something that you do naturally because it's not easy. And I think if it doesn't come naturally to you, it's hard to sit at home in front of a computer all day and write.

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AS: That's very true. Yes. I definitely think that the more you love to write, the easier it comes and the faster your writing comes. And of course, when it comes to anything like this, the faster you're writing is, the more money you make.

HF: How did you go from getting this idea to then learning how to be a copywriter and getting started?

AS: I actually found copywriting training because that is the one thing that I knew that I needed because I knew I loved to write, but I also knew that I was not a marketing writer yet. That there was more to it than just loving to write. And so, I actually found copywriting training with a company called AWAI, which is American Writers and Authors Institute. I took their initial copywriting course and I really enjoyed it. I thought that the writing was a whole different way to write in a whole different way to think about it. And it was really interesting and I found I really liked that.

I completed their initial course and then since my target was going to be to write for healthcare companies, I knew I needed more training because their initial course is what's called B2C writing, which is business to consumers. When you're going like directly from a company to the consumer, such as the skincare company, and then somebody's going to make the decision to buy that skincare cream. That's B2C writing.

But when you're writing for healthcare companies, you're going to be writing in the B2B area, which is business to business. The healthcare companies are going to sell to a hospital or to a doctor's office or something. That's B2B writing. And then I continued and I did their B2B courses, and seminars and met other B2B writers and I learned that area of it. And so, that was my initial training.

HF: Wow. You took this course. And how long was it?



AS: The first one probably took me about six weeks to complete, but for some people it takes more. I've heard people take it six months even, sometimes up to a year if they're doing it in between things and everything. But I was really committed to it and I set a goal for myself every day of how much I was going to complete and I just made myself stick to it.

HF: You sound like you have a lot of persistence, Adria. We're going to even get to how that factors in in a minute.

AS: Yes, it's really important that you make yourself stick to your goals when you're going to start a new business.

HF: Now a lot of times this is where people really get into trouble. We are good at taking courses. As you know, to become a doctor you have to do a lot of coursework and there are milestones and testing, but we often stumble when we actually have to take what we learned and find somebody to pay us to do it. After you finish these courses, how did you get your first client?

AS: I knew just what you said. I was going to be the same way. Great at finishing courses and everything, but I was not sure exactly how to get a client, especially a big client like a healthcare company because they have so much in-house experience and they have so many people approaching them that I just was not sure. I actually hired a coach who wrote in the B2B area. Now he was not in healthcare, which I think probably would've helped me even more if I had someone in that area. But he did have B2B experience.

And so, I hired a coach and he taught me not only how to get my website up on my own, and I did my own copywriting for my website as kind of a sample, a course of what I can do, but he also taught me how to find the contacts that I needed within the companies and then them through email in order to show them what I can do and to get them to give me a chance. And that was a big thing. It was just getting someone who knew what they were doing to help me take those last steps.

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HF: That's certainly some copywriting you had to do in those emails to try to persuade someone to let a newbie have a chance. That's kind of an interesting see one, do one, teach one in a way that you had to actually do the copywriting to get the copywriting job. How many emails did you send out before you got that first opportunity?

AS: Oh goodness gracious. So many. I was sending out a minimum of 70 to 75 emails a day, often more than that. And it took me about six to seven weeks of that many emails every single day before I got someone who contacted me back and said yes.

HF: Oh my gosh. Well, how did you even find that many companies to reach out to?

AS: That's what surprising is. There are so many companies out there. I started thinking, and what I did was I made a list of everything that goes into healthcare from imaging to surgical equipment, cardio equipment, EHR, the whole nine yards. I made a list of everything I could think of that went into healthcare and I started Googling companies. Companies that do EHRs, companies that do this. And then wrote down every single one of them. And I was actually shocked how many hundreds up to thousands of companies there are that actually are there and are very successful and need writers.

HF: Holy cow. That would stop most people on their track, just having to find the companies and then find a contact person to reach out to, knowing that most of it's probably going to be ignored.

AS: Yeah, and most of it was ignored. The thing is that it only takes one or two yeses to start everything off. And that my one "yes" started everything off.

HF: Okay. So, who was this one "yes?" This brave person.



AS: It was a lady at Caria, the company that does EHRs. Her name is Lea and I just absolutely love her. She gave me the chance to start writing content for their blogs because they target doctor's offices with EHRs and other solutions to make practices easier. And so, she let me start writing blog posts. Since I had experience running a doctor's office, then she knew that I would be able to write those from a perspective of how that can help, how things can help. And she gave me the shot and she loved my first article and knowing that she loved my first article gave me that confidence I needed to just keep going. And then not only did she love my first article and keep giving me more assignments, but she recommended me to other companies.

HF: I love her too. That is so great. I'm so glad you persisted and I'm sure it wasn't easy. Did you get to a point where thinking, "This is just not going to work, I may have to go back to practice or find something different?"

AS: Yes, there's always that in the back of your mind when you're starting out. It's such a big worry from a really successful practice to I am starting from scratch a new business. Yeah, that's always going to be in the back of your mind. But I do think that if you're persistent and if you just don't give up, you can make things happen.

HF: That's exactly what I've heard from other writers who had to get their start and they often talk about reaching out to hundreds of contacts before they got that opportunity. And it's those people who prevail and are doing what they really want to do. But that's why it really has to start with a love of writing because otherwise you're not going to bother. It's too painful.

AS: Right. It is. And you have to really want to have a different life. You have to really want to have the flexibility that your office didn't give you. You have to want to be able to, is it spend more time with your kids? Is it to take more vacations? You got to want those things so much more that you're willing to work for them no matter what.



HF: Yeah. Let's get into a bit of the nuts and bolts. Describe about how a typical day goes for you and some of the writing assignments that you're maybe even doing currently, because I know you're not limiting yourself at this point to healthcare.

AS: Right, that's very true. Because although I'm still doing quite a bit of healthcare writing, I actually had healthcare marketing managers that I was working with recommended me to companies that weren't in the healthcare space, just other marketing managers they knew and other types of companies. And so, now I write pretty much across the board. I've written for everything from skincare and supplements to furniture and trucking even.

HF: Wow, let's keep it interesting. You get to learn about different industries.

ASL It is. I enjoy that part of it because it keeps everything fresh and there's always something new. And if I'm getting a little bored on one thing, I switch over and write something different for an hour or two and then go back because there's not just one thing I'm doing. So I really enjoy that part of it.

HF: And I had mentioned in the intro that we're going to discuss about how this is different from medical writing when you're doing healthcare copywriting. I'm sure there's some overlap, but could you speak to that please, Adria?

AS: Yeah. Medical writing a lot of the times is just much more technical. When you're doing copywriting, your focus is a little bit more on what is the benefit behind this to the person you're writing to because all marketing writing is about to benefit. Because if the person at the end reading it doesn't benefit from it, then they're not moved by it.

With healthcare copywriting versus just healthcare writing. In healthcare copywriting, you're going to be doing things like one day I may be writing a brochure for a new imaging solution and the next day I may be writing a long form article for a healthcare company that's about a new discovery say in the anesthesiology area. But the whole

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focus of the article is pointing towards one of their solutions that they have that fits in with what it is. And so, it's the focus change. It's not technical writing, it's marketing writing focused on a benefit.

HF: And how do you determine whether what you're writing is ethical and appropriate for whatever the company or business wants the reader to perceive?

AS: In general, the company gives you pretty specific instructions. Especially when you're working with a large healthcare company, they have very specific steps that you go through. And so, you receive the brief on what they want. You generally will receive the research too. Sometimes you have to do your own, but a lot of times the research is already there that they have. And then they will have laid out exactly what you can and you can't say because everything is vetted. When you have a large healthcare company, everything is vetted through their attorneys at the end.

HF: Okay, that's helpful.

AS: Yeah. When you're working in the healthcare situation, you're never going to be the end person that looks at the article. It's going to go through multiple steps through multiple marketing managers. It's going to go through their legal department and it's going to come back to you for edits and then go again.

HF: Can you talk a little bit about compensation?

AS: Sure. As I said, I'm not only working in healthcare now, so I can give you a little bit more of an across the board look at it because it really varies. When you're working for the larger healthcare companies, obviously, the compensation is quite a bit higher than if you're working for a small company that's say in skincare or something.



If you're writing an article for a healthcare company, it's obviously much more involved. You're generally looking for say a thousand word article you're going to be looking at minimum is \$1,000, but usually over \$2,000 for the article. About \$2 a word or more.

HF: Yeah, that's pretty good pay.

AS: Yeah. And then if you're writing something just for say a skincare company like how to protect your skin this summer, you're going to write a 500 word article for say \$175 to \$200, but obviously it's so much faster to write.

HF: Obviously, there's going to be a difference if you're just getting started versus being established. But let's say for example, you are successful at this, you're working full-time for yourself and you're able to get clients. What might you be able to look at in terms of your income?

AS: That varies really widely. Once again, depending on who you write for and what type of copywriting you do. Because there are other types of copywriting called direct response copywriting, in which the pay is pretty astronomical. But for healthcare writing, I would say it's pretty easy to hit the six-figure mark up into the \$200,000-\$250,000 pretty easily once you're established and they can go up from there. But as I said, there are also other forms of copywriting like direct response where you see copywriters that get bonuses in the millions.

HF: Oh, that's kind of crazy.

AS: Yeah.

HF: This is all very interesting, and I'm sure encouraging for some of our listeners. I want to take a short break to share a resource, but when we come back I want to ask you about AI since some people are wondering, "Is this going to put writers out of business?"

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All right, my dear listeners, you may already know about my freebies. And one of my freebies that I have on my website is about medical writing. If you're thinking about writing in general and want to learn more about the different areas, because medical writing is a large area, I have this freebie on the Doctor's Crossing website. You just go to doctorscrossing.com, at the top is the freebie tab, and scroll down and you'll see the medical writing guide. I will have a little bit of information in there about copywriting, but you can learn a lot about medical writing in general.

All right, now I'd love to come back here with my wonderful guest, Dr. Adria Schmedthorst, and pick up on this question of AI, which I know I have some clients who have been thinking about maybe going into medical writing or other types of writing and they're afraid that AI is going to put everybody out of business.

AS: Yeah, I think that's been a concern for a lot of people. I find it kind of interesting because when everything first started, I actually did see a very small lull in the business and it lasted about three weeks to four weeks. And then all of a sudden I got flooded with people that were like, "Ugh, we thought we could do this with AI and it's just not what we think it is. It's just not where we think it is." And I agree, I have, I have looked at it and I've tested it myself and it's definitely not at the point that it's taking over copywriting by any means. I think it's quite a long, long way off.

It cannot be persuasive. It doesn't have that human element of persuasion in it that copywriting requires. But at the same time, I also am looking into the opportunities to use it because where I see an opportunity for copywriters to actually use it and expand their business is by using it to help them do more consulting-type work and getting ideas from it for consulting. And so, I actually think that it's going to present an opportunity rather than a problem.

HF: If you were to look into a crystal ball Adria and say you're in your business five years from now, how might you be using AI to your benefit and also to the benefit of other companies with copywriting?

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AS: Well, we're considering moving our business at the moment, expanding into AI consulting as well as copywriting. Because they tend to go hand in hand. When you're using AI at all in a business, the main important thing is the prompts. And if people do not know how to write the prompts, AI cannot turn out what you're looking for. And so, copywriters are the perfect people to come up with the correct prompts to get what you need out of it. Because you know that old saying? Garbage in, garbage out. That's what AI is. If you put garbage in, you get garbage out.

Copywriters are the perfect people to learn how to use AI in a way to get out of it much more I guess perfected type of copy. I actually see it as an opportunity for that and that's what we are looking at right now is moving into that as well on top of copywriting, is AI consulting.

HF: That is fascinating and it's true. The people who survive when change comes and change is inevitable are the people who can adapt. And I love that you're already strategically thinking about how to do this and you have planned because it's true. AI is here to stay, it's going to evolve over time. No one can actually predict the effects it's going to have in an industry. But if you're able to keep looking at what your customers and clients need, and figuring out a solution, you'll always have work.

AS: That's right. I think that you just have to keep looking forward and just not standing still because people that stand still get left behind.

HF: Right. You have so many good phrases. I can tell why you're a great writer, Adria.

AS: Thank you.

HF: All right, we're getting close to time here, but I did want to ask you if there's a certain type of insurance that you have as a copywriter. For example, errors and omissions insurance.



AS: Yes, that's the one insurance that you would want. It's not as big of a deal, especially when you're getting started. One of the things that my coach taught us was that we have to have a very good fee agreement. I have a pretty ironclad fee agreement that I send out to clients when I start work with them that says you acknowledge that I'm not an attorney and anything that you put up that you use, once you use it, you have said that you have checked it with your attorney and you now release me from all claims. And so, that's one of the first steps. But yeah, once you get a little bit larger, errors and admissions policy is good.

HF: Oh, excellent. I am definitely going to put in the show notes this excellent resource that you mentioned, the American Writers and Authors Institute where you took your courses. And it looked like they have a lot of really good information on that site.

AS: Yes.

HF: I want to thank you for coming on the podcast. I've been wanting to do an episode on copywriting for a while and you are an answer to my prayer.

AS: Thank you for having me on Heather.

HF: Yeah, this has been wonderful. Do you have any last words you'd like to share with our listeners?

AS: I just think that if someone is ready to have the flexibility, this is a great way to do it. It's changed my life completely, and as you mentioned, my husband copyrights now too. We both are working from home and have the flexibility to be with our children.

HF: Well, that is so neat that you're doing this together. I just want to add too because we mentioned your daughter and you told me when we were preparing for the



podcast that she reads a 600 page book in a day. I'm glad that her brain is doing really well and she's doing really well too.

AS: She is. She is a beautiful 15-year-old now and is just doing wonderfully and she reads like crazy. I'm hoping that she'll eventually want to write as well.

HF: It sounds like it runs in the family, biological or not.

AS: Yes.

HF: Yes, yes. Wonderful. Well, thank you again.

AS: Thank you Heather.

HF: All right, my dear listeners, this was super fun. If it inspires you, please check out the resource that I mentioned, the medical writing resource guide that's a freebie, and I will have a little bit in there about copyright. I'm going to add that in before we post it, and also the link in the show notes for the American Writers and Authors Institute. As always, don't forget to carpe that diem and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye for now.

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