

Entry-level Recruitment

Tips on how to get your first job in med comms



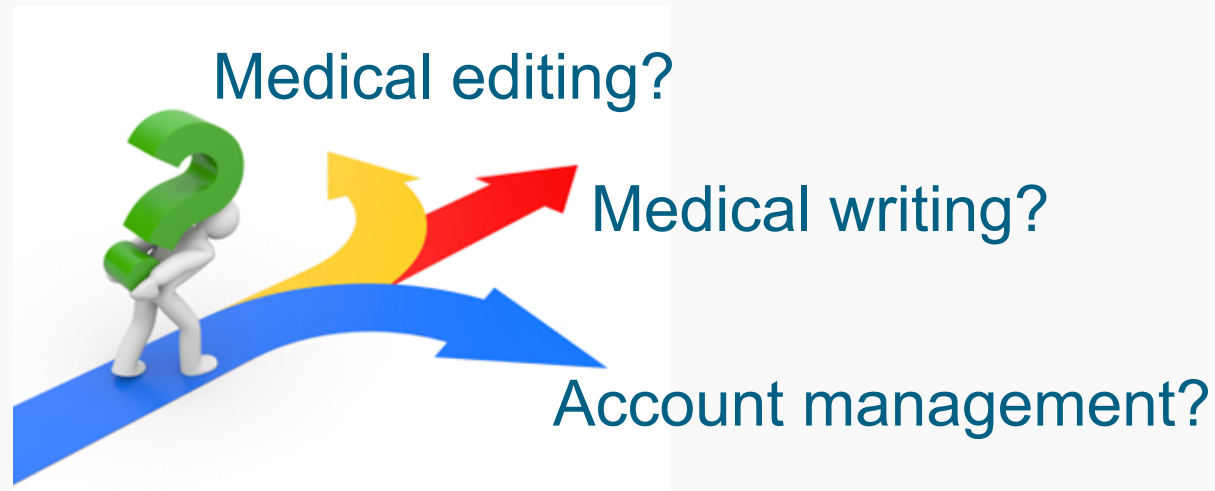
Profile of Karen Kent

- PhD in veterinary microbiology
- Post docs in animal and human infectious diseases, including 9 years working on HIV vaccine development
- Moved into med comms in 1998 as a Medical Writer
- Held in-house roles until June 2011, then set up my own business
- >4.5 years experience in recruitment for med comms

A career in med comms?

If medical communications the next step on your career path ...

... which direction is the right one for you?



Getting that first job ...

The entry-level market is very competitive...

...and there is a lot of interest in a relatively small number of vacancies

Getting that first job ...

So how do you maximise your chances of success?

- A well-presented CV and cover letter
- Good knowledge of the industry and the companies you want to target
- A good understanding of the role you are applying for
- Key skills appropriate for that role
- Relevant experience ... if you can get it!
 - Publications, science writing, blogging, EMWA training courses, Sfp training courses, etc.

Your CV

- Concise – maximum of two pages
 - Personal profile – 2 or 3 sentences that capture who you are and what you can offer med comms
 - Work experience – focus on transferrable skills and experience rather than laboratory techniques
 - Education – list chronologically, most recent first
 - Personal interests – optional, but I like to know that people have a life outside of work!
 - Publications on 3rd and subsequent pages

Key skills and experience

- Scientific/medical knowledge
 - Proven by PhD and post-doctoral experience
- Writing skills
 - Do you like writing? Can you write well? Do you have the versatility to adapt your writing for different audiences?
- Attention-to-detail
 - Do you have a high level of attention-to-detail? Can you edit and proofread your own work?
- Project management
 - Are you highly organised and can you multitask?
- Time management
 - Can you manage your own time effectively and work under pressure to meet deadlines?

Key skills and experience

- Interpersonal and communication skills
 - Can you communicate well with colleagues and clients? Are you a team player?
- Flexibility
 - Are you prepared to work outside of your job description and be flexible with your working hours?
- Creativity
 - Do you have a creative flair and a good eye for artwork and page layout? Do you think creatively with strategic insight?
- Pro-activity
 - Can you work out what needs to be done and get on with it rather than wait to be told what to do?

Cover letter

- Needs to be well crafted, but can be more informal than your CV
- Avoid repeating all the information provided in your CV
- Expand on why you want the role you have applied for, and what attracts you to the company you have applied to

Which company is right for you?

- Location
 - The main centres are London, Oxford and the NW – but there are companies dotted across the UK
 - Check out the map on the MedComms Networking site
- Size of company
 - Large international corporation versus a smaller, privately owned company ... or something in between?
- Main focus of work
 - Publication planning, meetings and monographs, digital, or a mix of deliverables?

Applying for a job

- Networking and careers events enable you to meet representatives from med comms companies
- Job vacancies are generally posted on company websites and on specialist job boards e.g. NextMedCommsJob.com
- Many companies recruit directly at entry-level so keep an eye on the careers pages of company websites
- Make sure any correspondence is well written ... don't rush ... and take the time to proofread it!

Medical writing test

- The purpose of a writing test is to assess your current writing ability and future potential:
 - Scientific understanding
 - General writing ability
 - Commercial writing ability
- Your work will be reviewed for:
 - Scientific content and interpretation of data
 - How appropriate the article is for the stated audience
 - Use of English: spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - Attention to detail

Medical editing test

- For anyone aspiring to be a medical editor or production editor, the purpose of an editing test is to assess your:
 - General use of English
 - Ability to copy-edit and proofread
 - Eye for design and layout

Account management test

- Increasingly, tests are being introduced for trainee account management roles:
 - Written and verbal communications skills
 - Use of PowerPoint
 - Creative awareness

After the writing/editing test ...

Only if your test meets the required standard will you be called for interview

- At interview you need to:
 - Know as much as you can about med comms
 - Be informed about the company and all its offerings
 - Be knowledgeable about the role you have applied for and how your skills meet the company's need
 - Be aware of relevant industry guidelines

At interview

- Be confident enough so your interviewer knows you are capable of doing the job ...

At interview ...

- Be confident enough so your interviewer knows you are capable of doing the job...
- ... but be modest enough so your interviewer knows you will take constructive criticism well



I strongly agree that space research is a waste of money. Why do we have to waste money on studying the universe when we can use that money to help human lives and study the earth? Also NASA has failed numerous times, so how can we trust them again with the funded money?

Space research is a waste of money for many reasons. Firstly, money is better used to help human lives than wasting it on space research. Take a look around the world, does every country have food, water, shelter and money? NO! Instead of wasting it money on space research we can give it to the poor and needy like people in Africa. Also the money is needed to help with global warming. Scientists still have to find way to drop the levels of CO₂, and how can they do that with when most of the money is being wasted on space research. The money can also be spent on cancer research, let's face it, there are all lot of diseases out there that have no cure such as Acute lymphocytic leukemia, AIDS/HIV, diabetes and asthma.

Secondly, space research is a waste of money because their there are many things still needed yet to be discovered on Earth. The entire deep sea is completely untouched because we have no machines that can go down there without exploding by the intense pressure. It's weird that we have discovered more of outer space than something we have on our own planet. Also some of Antarctica is still unexplored and even the depths of the Amazon rainforest. The money should be spent on this rather than space research because some parts of the earth is still undiscovered.

Lastly, NASA has failed many times before. On December the 3rd NASA lost contact with a 165million mars polar lander 10 mins minutes before the landing. Let's also not forget the time they failed the 125 million mars climate orbiter over metric calculations. They wasted all that money and they did not succeed. So how can we trust them again?

Comment [A1.1]: Good use of rhetorical questions. rhetorical questions are always good to use in a persuasive text.

Comment [A1.2]: If you jump into "Firstly" straight after the introduction, there is no connection between the first paragraph and the introduction.

Comment [A1.3]: All of the info in this paragraph is about human needs except for this bit about global warming. Either put the global warming part in the next paragraph, which is about environmental issues, or link global warming to increase in human tropical diseases or displaced people due to global warming, etc.

Comment [A1.4]: Why is it important to discover the rest of Earth? You have raised a good point by saying that we should discover our home planet before exploring space. However, exploring space brings economic and technological advances to people. You can strengthen your argument for this paragraph by linking the benefits to people due to studying places like

At interview ...

Even if you have completed a pre-interview writing assignment, some companies ask for a short writing or editing test to be completed at interview



The job offer

- Job title
- Salary
- Benefits (may include: pension, holiday, bonus schemes, private health care, life insurance, gym membership, etc.)
- Start date
- Probationary period
- Line manager / team / therapy area(s) / drugs / clients
- If not provided already, this is the point at which you will be asked for the names and contact details of your referees

Need help to find that first role?



Need help to find that first role?

- An overview of the medical communications industry?
- The right company for you, in the right location?
- Review of your CV?
- A practice writing or editing test?
- Assistance with job applications?
- Interview preparation?
- Overview of industry guidelines?

Success (for some)!

In the past couple of years, candidates I have assisted have been offered jobs as:

- Trainee writers
 - med communications
 - publication planning
 - regulatory
 - market access
 - advertising

- Trainee account handlers
 - traditional
 - digital

Success (for some)!

Companies joined	
Abacus	KP360
Adelphi	McCann (Regulatory)
AMICULUM Digital	Nucleus Global
Biomed Central	Oxford Pharmagenesis
Biowrite (NZ)	Porterhouse
Chameleon	PAN (advertising)
Choice Healthcare	Spoonful of Sugar (patient support)
Elements Communications	Synergy Vision
Envision Pharma	TextPharm
Evidera (market access)	Watermeadow
Insight (regulatory)	7.4

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