




Been there, done it, got the T-shirt. Life in Med Comms

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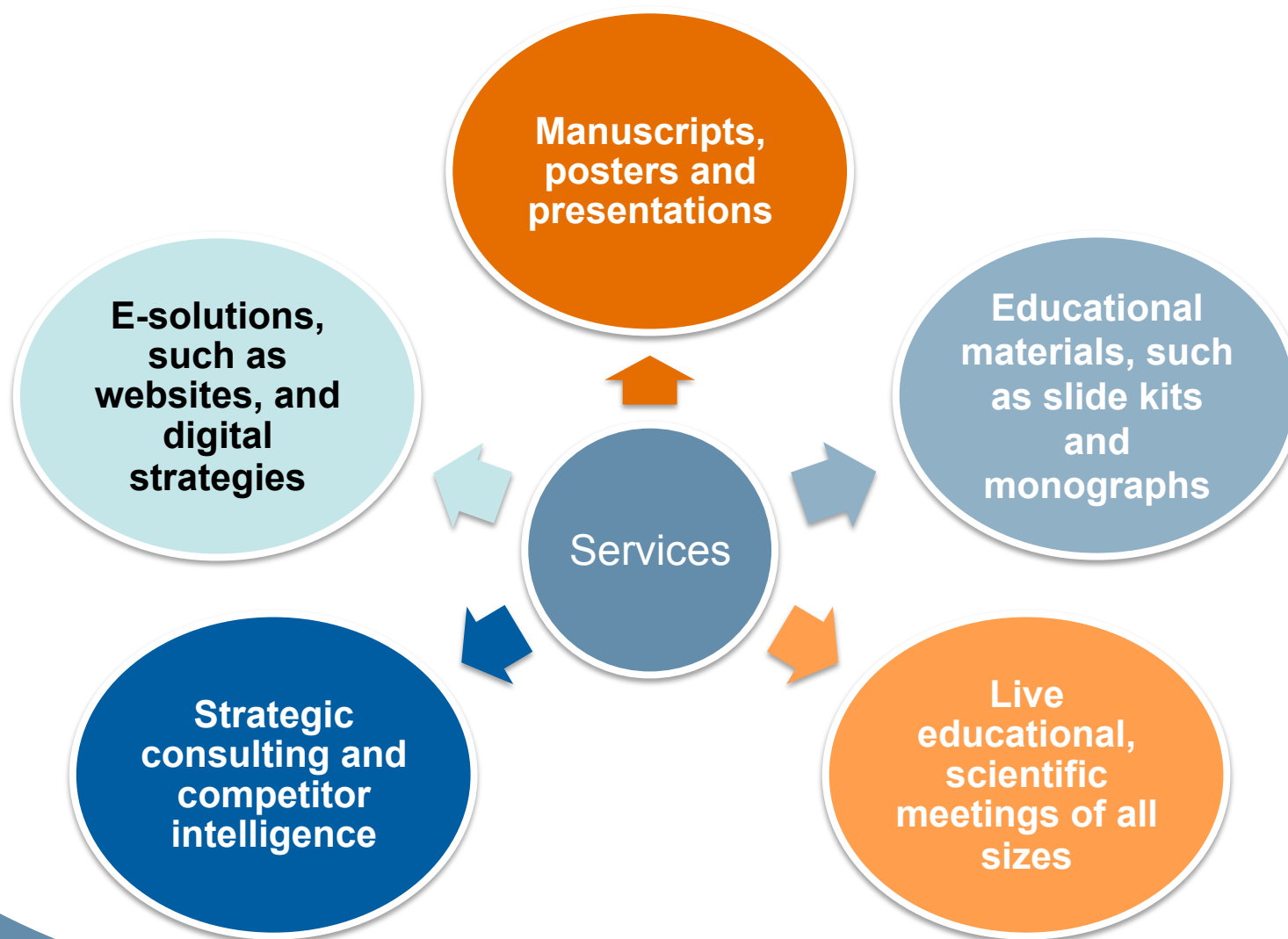




What does a medical writer do?

- **Helps pharmaceutical companies to communicate about their drugs to healthcare professionals**
 - Writes high-quality, scientific copy in ALL areas that med comms companies work in
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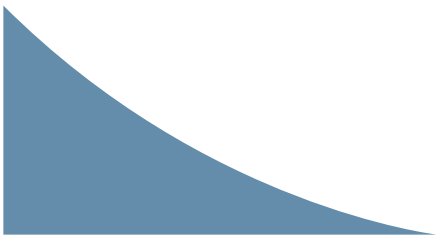
Overview of some medical communication services





BUT... there is so much more

- **NO two days are ever the same**
- As you become more experienced, you will be given greater opportunities



Increasing opportunities with greater experience

Associate
Medical Writer

- Learn the job
- High proportion of job spent writing at desk

Medical Writer

- Build up experience
- Increase client contact & live meeting experience

Senior
Medical Writer


- Pass on experience and review the work of others
- Lead client teams and meetings without support

Editorial Team
Leader

- Line management and business development
- Provide clients with strategic advice



Why did I become a medical writer for a medical communications company?

- Variety of projects
 - Variety of therapy areas
 - Clear career pathway
 - Good mentorship and training
 - Good financial benefits
 - Like-minded people
 - Work in different parts of the UK / world
 - **... and fundamentally, I enjoy writing**
- 



Is medical writing for you?

Enjoy writing

Scientific background and love of science

Pedantic and accurate

Good communications skills


Excellent research skills

Don't mind or love travel


Ability to think on feet

Thick skinned!!





**How did I get into medical writing?
(and what can you learn from my
experience)**



Qualifications

- I did a BSc (Hon) in Biological Sciences
- **BUT most medical writers have a MSc or PhD**
- Most, but not all medical writers have a life sciences degree
 - I know of medical writers with Chemistry and English degrees



Work experience



- I worked at AstraZeneca in their communication dept. during Summer holidays while I was at University

Benefits of gaining work experience

- Shows you are self-motivated
- Demonstrates your interest in medical writing / communications
- Enables you to provide references
- Helps you to get on your feet faster when you begin medical writing

Tips to gaining relevant work experience

- Contact freelance medical writers and med comms consultants
- Some may offer paid experience
- We are currently looking for suitable individuals with experience in vaccines, infectious disease, neurology, oncology or nephrology



Some other examples of relevant experience

1

- **WRITE REGULARLY**, preferably on a relevant topic
- Doctoral thesis, publications and grant applications
- Otherwise: blogs, newspapers, university newsletters, etc

2

- Demonstrate **PRESENTATION SKILLS**
- Lecturing and giving presentations at conferences
- Otherwise: journal clubs, dept talks and other Uni clubs

3

- **ATTEND RELEVANT COURSES** in medical writing or related to pharmaceutical communications
- Continue to attend relevant free events

My first jobs were not directly in medical writing...

...but were very relevant

- I worked in medical information



- Provided information to internal teams and healthcare professionals on a number of drugs in written and oral format

What did I learn from medical information?

Research skills

- Ability to drill down to key info without getting side-tracked by needless detail

Filter key information fast

- Picking-up on a new drug or therapy area within days or weeks is often needed

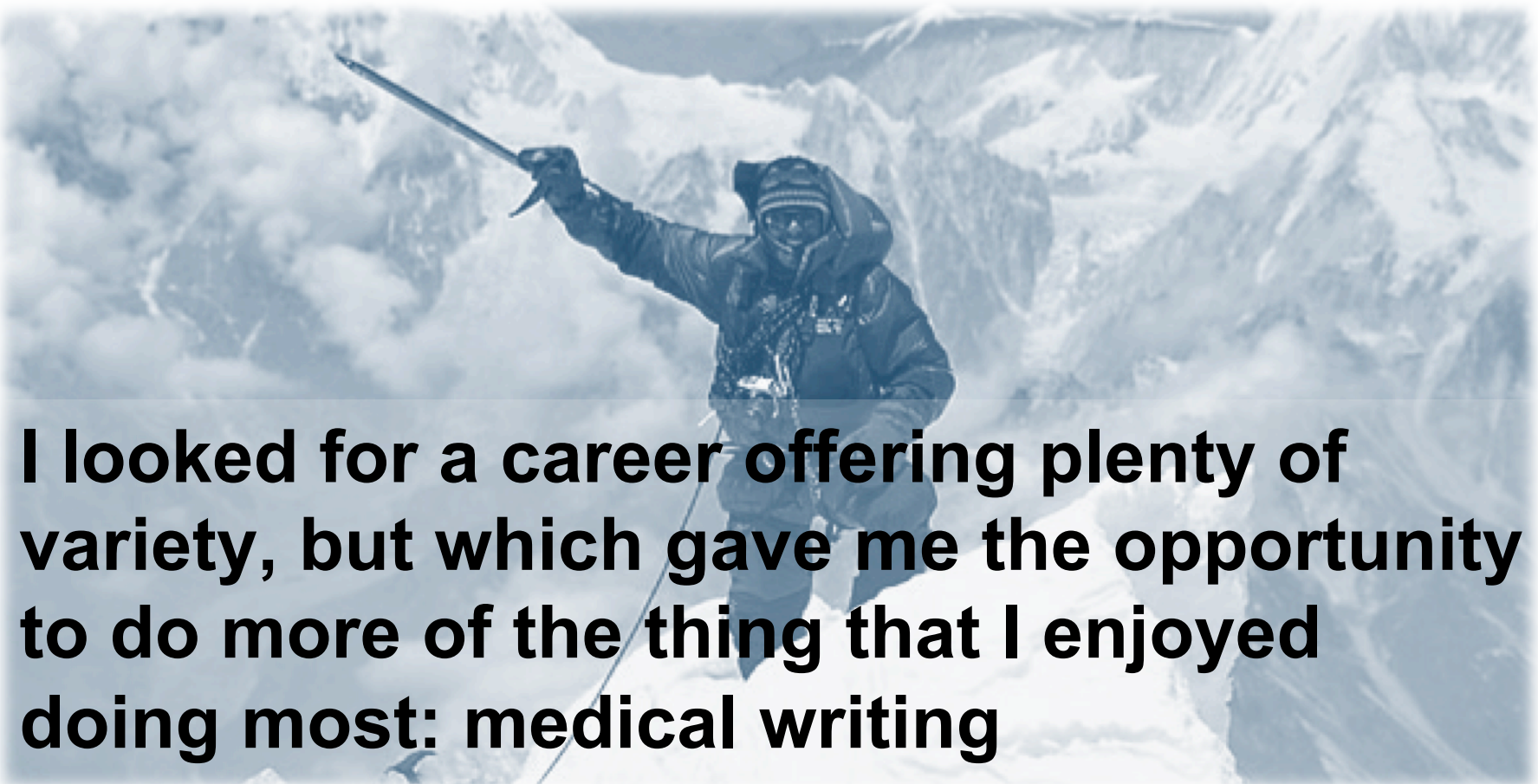
Attention to detail and scientific accuracy

- Ensuring scientific accuracy is one of the most critical requirements for med writing


Guidelines and codes

- Need to become familiar with many different codes and guidelines


Ten years ago, I felt it was time for a new adventure

A photograph of a mountaineer in full winter gear, including a hooded jacket and goggles, climbing a steep, snow-covered mountain. The climber is holding an ice axe in their right hand, which is raised. The background shows more snow-capped peaks under a clear sky.

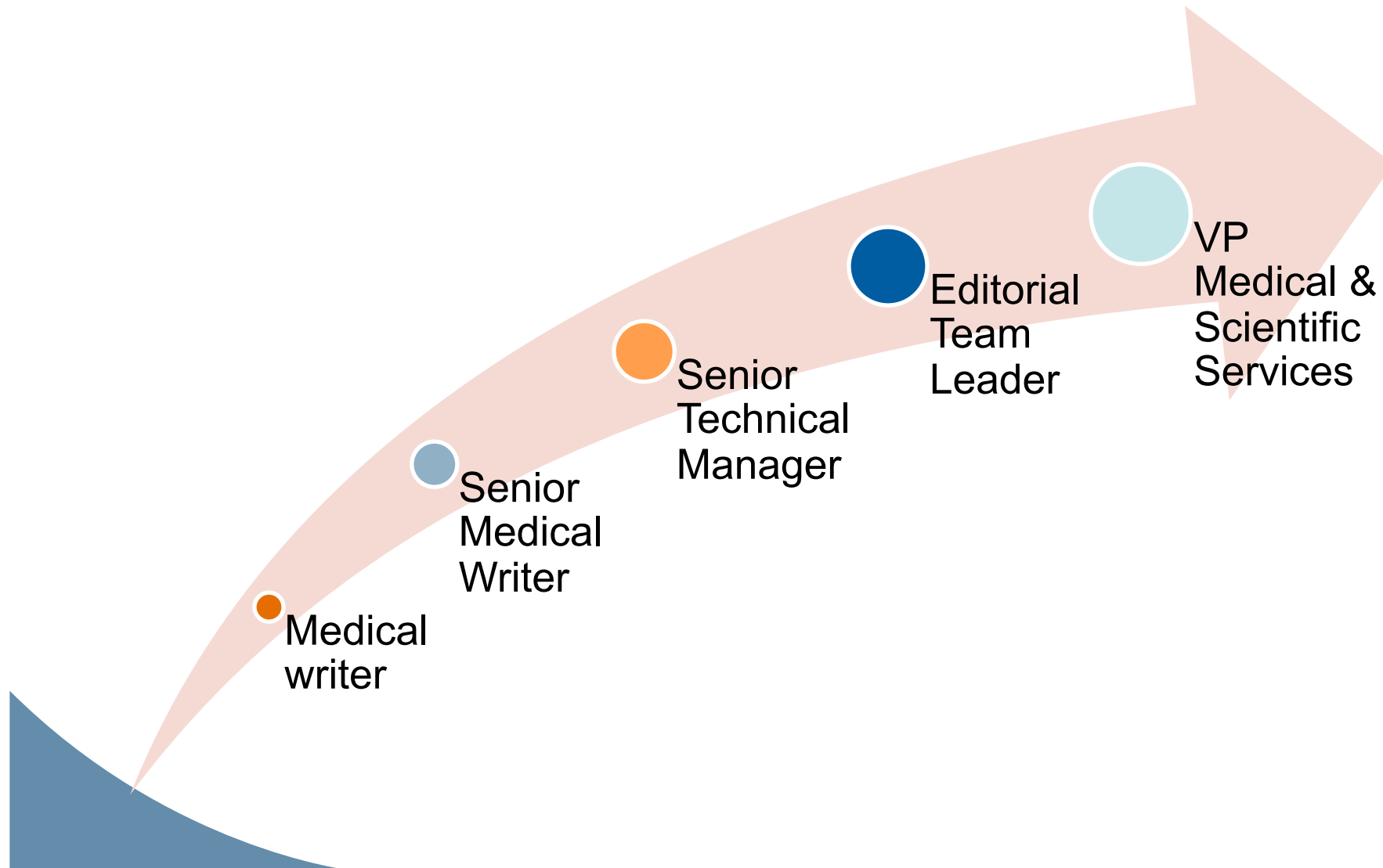
**I looked for a career offering plenty of
variety, but which gave me the opportunity
to do more of the thing that I enjoyed
doing most: medical writing**



What can you learn from the pathway I took into medical writing?

- Having a **PhD in life sciences** is very helpful, but not essential
 - **Gaining relevant experience** will help you get your first job in medical writing
 - Before applying for jobs, try to ensure you can **demonstrate the following skills**
 - Writing experience
 - Research skills
 - Scientific accuracy
 - Knowledge of industry codes and guidelines
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My pathway through med comms before becoming freelance



Benefits of being freelance



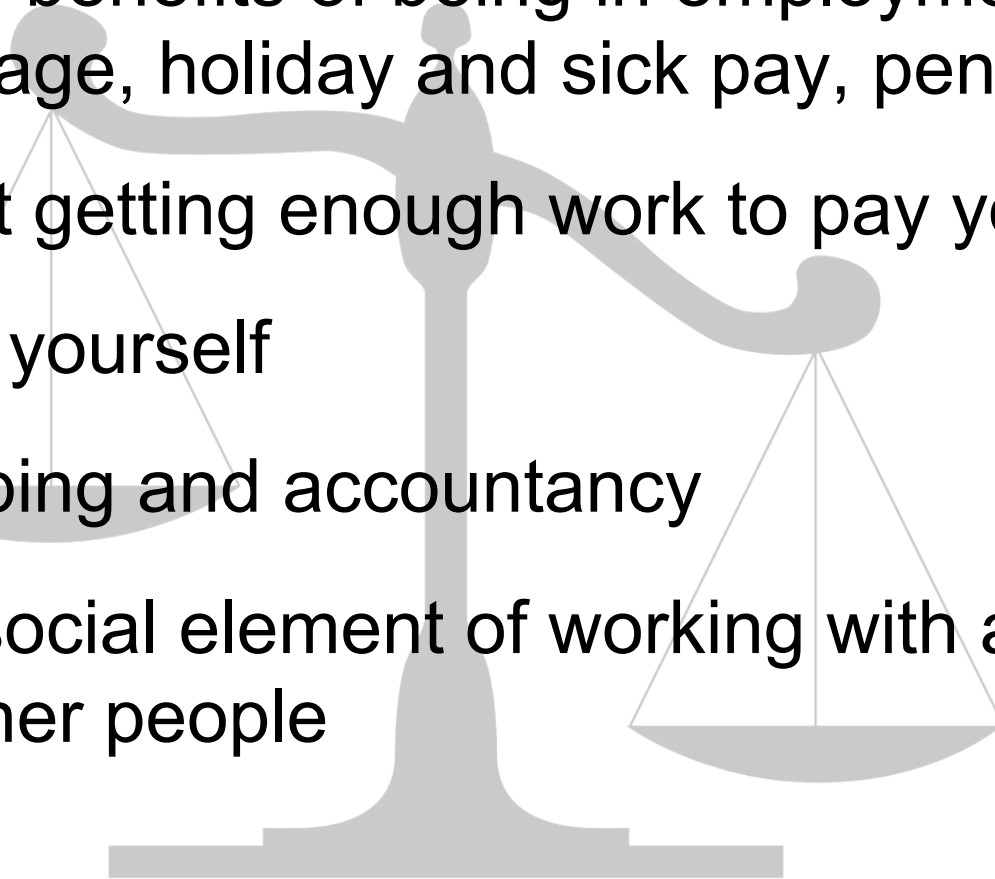
You are your own boss

Flexibility of when you work
and what work you do

Potential to earn more

Drawbacks of freelancing

- Losing the benefits of being in employment (regular wage, holiday and sick pay, pension etc.)
- Risk of not getting enough work to pay your bills
- Marketing yourself
- Book-keeping and accountancy
- Lose the social element of working with and around other people





Don't think about becoming a freelancer too soon!!

- I had over 10 years of medical communications experience before I started working for myself
- This meant
 - I had a wide range of experience of working on different projects and therapy areas
 - I had considerable experience in providing strategic guidance and finding solutions to particular problems
- Most importantly – the longer you have stayed within agencies, the more people you know




Quick tips for your job application process





Contact relevant recruitment companies

- As well as contacting med comms companies, contact recruitment agencies
 - They will do the hard work by sending your CV to relevant companies (and they are FREE for you to use!!)
 - They may also help you prepare for interviews
- 

Social network



- Join LinkedIn, connect with people in med comms and participate in relevant groups
- Follow the conversation, companies and experts on Twitter (#medcomms and #pubplan)

Research the job!!



- Make sure you know
 - About the pharmaceutical and med comms industries
 - About regulations and guidelines
 - About what a medical writer actually does

What's next for me?

- The truth is I can't imagine being in a different role
- Each day I am writing or communicating about something different, and in doing so I am learning about something new



Who needs more than that?

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