What to expect of life in a MedComms Agency

Is Agency life for you?

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View of life on the inside!

- **20 years’ experience**
  - Medical communications/publishing
  - Client services, project management and editorial roles (but not writing!)

- **External perspective**
  - Coaching, performance manager, development team for new event management software

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What to expect today?
A minute to reflect

How might medical writer role suit you?

What questions do you still have?
Agency life – what to expect?

- Buzz of team work
- High pressure but exciting industry
- Lucrative career

- You get to say:
  - ‘Push the envelope’
  - ‘Strategize’
  - ‘Redefine the paradigm’

Your desk can be anywhere in the world!
- Congress meeting room
- Hotel room
- Corporate headquarters
- Departure lounge

You learn on your feet!
Pharmaceutical marketing =

- Establish a market
- Support product profile
- Build relationships with prescribers & stakeholders

Ethical & regulatory framework
Medical Communications=

- Commercialize the need for product
- Educate & influence audiences
- Commercialize study data
- Product profile
- Relationships
- Market

Ethical & regulatory framework

Client
Medical Writing =

Client & Content

- Style: meeting, publication; new media
- Communicate current medical opinion
- Balance scientific data & messages

Ethical & regulatory framework

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BUT Agency = service provider

Objective 1: Achieve sales targets
- New clients
- Repeat business
- New services
- Into other depts.
- New products
- New indications
- New therapy areas

Develop & pitch

Objective 2: Achieve profit targets
- Other accounts
- Other projects
- Other project stages (editing, design, production)
- Non-writing (admin, meetings, project management, etc)

Implement & deliver

Dual focus reduces dependency on existing clients
4 Realities of agency life...

- You are a resource with competing priorities and deadlines
- You learn ‘live’ and in-front of clients – but it takes time to be trusted
- Life would be easier without your team!
- Life would be easier without your client!
What’s a job well done?

✓ Produced to brief (objective)
  • Deliver on time, to budget, quality
  • Balance science, marketing, ethical & regulatory

✓ A happy client (subjective)
  • Make their lives easier and help in career
  • But is the client always right?
Agencies will change because client and landscape are changing

• **Changing pharma client**
  - Highly business aware + personal career
  - High turnover = low corporate memory + experience
  - Time/resource pressured

• **Increasing competition**
  - Clients switch - because they can!
  - Low barrier (multinationals → individuals)
So, what suits you/your skills?
Depends on agency style/culture

- Size/niche/multi service
- Structure and style
  - Hierarchical/flat/business units
  - Formal/entrepreneurial
- Support services
  - Systems/processes/financials/IT
  - HR, esp. training & development opportunities
Depends on team structure

- **Writing model**
  - Freelance/in-house writers

- **Key relationships**
  - Writer + editor / project manager / account manager
  - Fixed teams or matrix

- **Job titles don’t predict role**
  - Editor/project editor/project manager/account exec/account manager
Where can you add value?

- Challenger and solution finder
- Editor and quality controller
- Chaser and coordinator
- Trusted client adviser and negotiator
- Project tracker and financial controller
- New business opportunity spotter
Lots of opportunities beyond writing

**Business development + Client service**
- New clients
- New products/indications
- New therapy areas
- Creating new services
- Leading pitches
- Strategic direction

**Operational + Editorial**
- Project management
- Medical Direction
- QA/QC
- Line management
- Training/development
- Budgeting & finance

Think about potential beyond medical writing
What they don’t mention in the job-ad...
Common afflictions reported by agency staff*

- Project-creep (a slowly growing specification)
- Canujustitis (freebies; ‘lastminute.com’)
- Dripfeedsia (pressure to start w/o all data)
- Timeline stenosis (narrowing of the deadlines)
- RSI (Repetitive Sign-off Interference)

*Tongue firmly in cheek

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Taking action...

Q: In what way would the role of medical writer suit you?
   Transferable skills/areas of interest/type of agency

Q: What is your goal from this workshop?
   Or what/who do you still need to ask?

Q: What are your next steps?
   Making contacts, starting research, CV etc
Thank you.