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
  – Performance coach helping professionals to work smarter
Take a minute to reflect

How might medical writer role suit you?

What questions do you still have?
What to expect today?
Agency life - the same everywhere?

- 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!
Medical Communications =

Pharmaceutical marketing =
Establish a market
Support product profile
Build relationships with prescribers & stakeholders

Ethical & regulatory framework
Medical Comms: what to expect?

Commercialize the need for product

Educate & influence audiences

Commercialize study data

Ethical & regulatory framework

Client
Medical Writer: what to expect?

- Style: meeting, slides, publication; new media
- Client & Content
- Therapy area & thought leaders
- Brand data & messages vs competitors
- Ethical & regulatory framework
Agencies are service providers

**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**

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New clients reduce dependency on existing clients
Realities of agency life...

- You are a resource with competing priorities and deadlines
- You learn ‘live’ and in-front of clients – but it can take time to be trusted
- Your desk can be anywhere in the world!
- ‘A job well-done’ is not a simple measure
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?
But, pharmaceutical clients are changing

• Profile
  – Highly business aware + personal career
  – High turnover = low corporate memory + experience
  – Time/resource pressured

• Intense 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
Opportunity?

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

WINNING and KEEPING clients
What you won’t find in a job-ad...
Common afflictions reported by agency staff*

- Project-creep (a slowly growing specification)
- Canujustitis (need for 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.