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

In what ways would the role of medical writer suit you?

What questions do you still have
Who do you need to ask?
What to expect today?

- Challenges and opportunities of agency life
- What type of agency might suit you/your skills
- Next steps...
What’s it like in an agency?

✓ 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 =

Ethical & regulatory framework

Commercialize the need for product

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

To educate & influence audiences

Commercialize study data

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Medical Writer =

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

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

New clients reduce dependency on existing clients
Realities of agency life

- You are a resource with competing priorities and deadlines
- Learning takes place on ‘live’ projects and in-front of clients – but it can take time to be trusted
- Your desk can be anywhere in the world!
- Even ‘a job well-done’ is not always 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)
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 account 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
What opportunities are you looking for?

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
Think about your transferable skills

- 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
- Value-adder
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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Your Career Insights...
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