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

• >3.5 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?

Medical editing?
Medical writing?
Account management?
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
• 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
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!
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?
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 the cover letter or email that you send with your CV is well written … and take the time to proofread it!
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 life 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. (unless every country has 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.) Blatantly, the money is needed to help with global warming. Scientists still have to find a way to drop the levels of CO2 and how can they do that when much of the money is being wasted on space research? The money can also be spent (on cancer research. Let’s face it, there are a lot of diseases out there that have no cure such as AIDS/HIV, diabetes and asthma.

Secondly, space research is a waste of money because there are many things still needed to be discovered on Earth. The entire deep sea is completely unexplored because we have no machinery 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’s still unexplored between the depths of its ocean riveted. 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 539 million pound lunar lander (Apollo 13). Before the landing, let’s also not forget that time they killed the 135 million dollar orbit over metric calculations. They wasted all that money and they did not succeed. So how can we trust them again!
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

- 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 last year, candidates I have assisted have been offered jobs as:

– Trainee writers
  • med comms
  • regulatory
  • market access
  • advertising

– Trainee account handlers
  • traditional
  • digital
Success (for some)!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies joined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abacus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelphi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMICULUM Digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomed Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biowrite (NZ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chameleon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envision Pharma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidera (market access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight (regulatory)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Karen Kent PhD

Email: kk.windhorse@gmail.com

Tel: 01474 853 987 / Mob: 0778 626 1259

Web: www.windhorseservices.co.uk