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Your Career in Pharma



Plan your career in pharma

Career planning is simply negotiating - with yourself

The keys to successful negotiation are simple: set ground rules, clarify issues from all perspectives, brainstorm and agree a solution. The keys to successful career planning are much the same because career planning is simply negotiating – with yourself.

The ground rules

It's easier to make the right choices on your career path if you truly understand where you are now and where you want to be in the future. So, make time to focus on your career, and prepare to have your self perception challenged!

Clarify issues

Write down answers to these questions.

- What do I enjoy doing?
- What motivates me?
- What annoys me?
- What is important to me in a career?
- What opportunities do I have?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses?
- What sorts of things can I see myself doing?
- What do I want my personal- work-life balance to be?
- What interests do I have outside work?
- How would I like work to make me feel?

Ask others how they would answer some of these questions about you. Don't just ask those who'll tell you what you want to hear. Ask people you don't get along with – and learn from what they say.

Brainstorm

Now write down career goals for the short and long term. Short-term goals are specific objectives that, when met, you will take you on your way to meeting long-term goals (e.g. getting a qualification, getting a job in a chosen career, getting a promotion etc). Long-

term goals are broader plans for the future (e.g. family, lifestyle and career aspirations). Set them by envisioning what you want to be doing and where you want to be in the next five to ten years – and think about barriers you might have to overcome.

Define what you can offer a prospective employer. Look at your experience, qualifications, personality and skills. Identify achievements in your career to date. If you're new to the job market, give examples of achievements in your personal or academic life. If you're looking at a career change, identify skills you can transfer into a new role. Highlight where you have a skill deficit and see if you can improve in that area.

Write down career options that meet your aspirations but don't make choices at this stage. Visualise yourself in each role. Look at the types of things you really don't want to do. Be honest about this now to prevent mistakes that may come back to haunt you later!

Agree a solution

You've assessed your strengths and weaknesses, set your career and life goals and, for better or for worse, have confirmed the path for your career in the pharmaceutical sector.

Does size matter?

What type of company would you like to work for? Small companies can give you opportunity to work cross-functionally. They sometimes offer incentives to stay with them and it's easier for you to shine. Remember though, that being out there on your own or in a small team may be tough. And that small companies can become big companies. Big companies may offer more flexible benefits packages, the opportunity to work with a wider product range and a stronger marketing

infrastructure. Whatever size of company, you'll need to be able to handle change. There's a strong chance your company will be taken over or merged in the next few years!

Where do I look for jobs?

Scouring the general press for job advertisements is one option however the pharmaceutical industry has several dedicated publications which contain job adverts – the advantage of the latter being that you're more likely to find a suitable role. Indeed, it's worth keeping an eye on the adverts in such publications even when you are not actively job hunting. They give you a good idea of what the job situation is in your chosen field.

Most recruiters place advertisements on industry-specific websites. You can search by role, location, salary etc, and submit your CV for review. Most postings have contact names and email addresses so you can find out more about the role before applying formally.

Networking

Developing a professional network is a fundamental way of getting exposure to potential employers. Start with a list of people you know within or in some way associated with the pharmaceutical industry.

Once the contact is made, know what you want from it. Is it advice, information or a lead to another contact who may be able to help more? Always thank people for their help even if they haven't really moved your search on. If they have, go back to them with feedback. Be proactive and confident and above all, don't give up – the perfect job is out there waiting for you!

Get the best from your consultant

After all, you're looking for someone you can trust

The first and arguably most important step is to choose your agencies with care. You may think that the more you register with the more vacancies you are likely to hear about. This is not necessarily true. And this approach has its risks:

- You could flood the market with your applications. Pharma companies may tire of you.
- You could lose control of your job search. You might find yourself being put forward for roles you haven't had time to learn enough about.

Consider then what you really want from your consultant. Is it career advice, knowledge of the industry and its key players, a range of positions for which to apply? Which agency is best-placed to meet your specific requirements?

Don't be fooled by recruitment agencies with many pages of vacancies on their website. A quick check will often show that some vacancies are no longer current or have been duplicated to (falsely) portray a wealth of opportunity. Find an agency instead that has a range of vacancies (and therefore contacts), relevant experience and specialised knowledge of your industry. Ask potential consultants who they know and the type and volume of business they have done with particular companies in the past. And ask contemporaries who they've found supportive, helpful and successful. There's a lot to be said for taking up a personal recommendation. After all, you're looking for someone you can trust.

Career advice

If you are uncertain at this stage what your next career step could be, you need to ensure

that your consultant can give you sound career advice. Your consultant needs to be able to quickly assimilate your current experience and competencies in order to determine what roles are available to you.

An initial face-to-face meeting is important in this process. Telephone interviews are commonly used and are a good start but do not give ideal opportunity for you and your

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consultant to really get to know one another. Be prepared to spend time with your consultant, exploring every facet of your career to date. What have you done? What are you good at? What are you not so good at? What do you like? What don't you like? All these questions will help your consultant form a picture of the right type of role for you.

Company knowledge

If you know what you want to do but are not quite sure where you would like to do it, you need a consultant to help find the right company for you. Ask them which companies:

- have the type of role you're looking for
- have a product portfolio that interests you
- are located in the right area for you
- have an organisational culture in which you
- might enjoy working

Also find out who the key players in are in the organisation. Have you worked with them before? Do you want to again?

If you know what you want to do and don't have a particular preference towards where you do it, you may just want to use a consultant to help you to explore your opportunities. In this situation, your consultant can save you a good deal of time by exploring a range of roles for you. Make sure you're clear about what types of positions you do and don't want to consider.

Managing your consultant

Once you have chosen the consultant(s) that meets your requirements, there are a few things that you should do in order to ensure your relationships run smoothly.

Tell your consultant if he or she calls you to discuss a role for which you have already applied via another agency. The last thing you want is your CV landing on one manager's desk from five different places!

Never allow your CV to be sent to a company without your permission. A recruitment consultant should have first discussed the role with you in detail and sent you a job description for review.

Interviewing: beware of any consultant who simply leaves you to your own devices!

Give your consultant feedback as soon as possible after interviews so that they know your views when the client calls with theirs.

Be honest with your consultant they will be discreet but need to know if there are any issues that might affect your suitability for a role.

Finally, never fail to turn up for an interview without telling your consultant. A cancelled or re-arranged interview is acceptable - a 'no show' is not!