Senior Business Analyst

Innovations Division, The Wellcome Trust

What does your job entail on a day-to-day basis?

We provide approximately £60 million in funding annually for the development of healthcare technologies that aim to address unmet medical needs. So, a typical day could involve speaking to potential applicants of that funding, participating in the short listing process to consider if programmes could be funded (which mostly means assessing applications and doing any necessary diligence to better understand that proposal) and dealing with the varying needs of the current award holders. The analysts each have a portfolio of 10-12 active programmes that are monitored via Research Steering Group meetings so, although we don’t do this every day, we frequently attend project meetings (in person or by phone) and are responsible for reviewing milestone reports when a project has reached its next stage. Our management of the active programmes can frequently lead to engagement in intellectual property matters and reviewing or negotiating commercialisation transactions.

What qualifications are required?

All of the Senior Business Analysts at the Trust have PhDs or equivalent experience in Life-science or related fields (chemistry and bio-engineering/ bio-physics for example). They also have relevant experience in areas such as Technology Transfer or Business Development (from the Pharma or Biotech industries).

What other transferable skills do you need?

Relationship management and good communications skills are key skills as we are continuously engaging with the external scientific community (from Universities, Not-for-profit organisations and Industry) both more generally (to advise them about our funding and discuss potential areas of mutual interest) as well as specifically when we are managing active programmes. Sometimes we have to do difficult things like stopping projects, so it’s essential to have the people skills to manage that process in the best possible way.

 Are there opportunities to widen your knowledge of other areas in your field?

In the Innovations Division at the Trust we are all ‘generalists’ rather than specialists so no individual person is responsible for one therapeutic area. This means that we are continuously being exposed to new areas of science and technological innovation.

Is training continual? Career Progression?

The Wellcome Trust has an ongoing training programme that all staff can access, as well as being supportive of personal development in areas not directly related to the job. In terms of Career Progression, there is a relatively ‘flat’ structure and although I was promoted from Business Analyst to the Senior role, my best opportunities for career progression in the future are likely to come from outside of the organisation.

What do you enjoy the most in your job?

My favourite part of the job is meeting the investigators of the awards that we have funded because they are driven to develop the healthcare technologies that have the potential to radically change the future of healthcare in the UK and beyond. They are often very inspiring people to work with.

What challenges do you have to overcome?

Like most jobs there is a significant amount of admin involved in managing projects and it can be a balancing act to get the paperwork done and then clear your mind so that you can assess a scientific milestone report by the appropriate deadline.

Any advice for those interested in a position such as yours?

This question is tricky because my role requires previous experience in a related field, so if working for the Wellcome Trust’s Innovations Division appeals, I would recommend getting relevant experience in another organisation before applying to the Trust as we don’t offer an entry-level position.

What sources did you use to find out about the job vacancy? I found out about the vacancy by looking on the organisation’s webpage and, because I had a friend who already worked there, was able to find out more about the role.

Is there anything that you miss about being in the lab?

I miss being on my feet and running around the lab (rather than sitting at a desk all day) but I don’t miss the failed experiments!