**TIBBS Career Blitz Career Profile Questionnaire**

1. Please provide your name and employer:

Rachel Haake, MedThink SciCom

1. What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?

Current: Medical Writer – 3 weeks

Previous: Associate Medical Writer – 8 months

1. Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?

UNC Chapel Hill

Psychology and Neuroscience – Behavioral and Integrative Neuroscience

1. Did you do a postdoc?

No

1. What are your main daily responsibilities?

Every day is different, but on average my main daily responsibilities include:

* Keeping track of the projects I’m supporting as they move across departments (eg, after I write something, it has to go to the Editorial team for copy editing and data verification) and communicating with our team’s Project Manager to determine which projects to prioritize
* Developing new or integrating edits/feedback into existing content (eg, manuscripts, abstracts, conference presentations, slide decks)
* Tracking down literature or data sources to support the content we develop
1. What are the keys to success in your career field?
* Communicating with teammates
* Detail orientation
* Understanding preclinical and clinical research/data
* Managing competing priorities with shifting deadlines
* Strategic planning for data collection and publication (more senior roles)
1. What were the most important factors in choosing your career path and current employer?

Choosing a career path: The ability to write, create, and use my knowledge of biomedical research

Choosing my current employer: Comprehensive benefits and a company culture that aligned with my values

1. What activities (if any) did you participate in that helped you be successful in obtaining your job?

Most skills we build during grad school (eg, writing grants and manuscripts, designing conference posters, writing conference abstracts, interpreting data, strategic planning for data collection and publication, teaching/ designing lectures) are valuable for a career in medical communications.

Some important pieces of medical writing are developing content (sometimes covering a subject outside your expertise), incorporating peer and editorial review, and integrating (sometimes unclear) client feedback, all on tight and shifting deadlines. Experiences that helped prepare me for these responsibilities were writing and editing for UNC SWAC’s blog, writing for the National Science Policy Network (NSPN’s) blog, writing press releases for the Journal of Science Policy and Governance and NSPN’s policy memo competition, and participating in writing workshops.

1. What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?
2. Talk to people who work in the field and at the company you’re interested in.
3. If you’re searching for a career outside of academia, don’t sell your academic experiences short.
4. How is the work/life balance in your career field and how much of a factor was that in your career choice?

Work/life balance can be hit or miss at medical communications agencies, so it’s important to talk with people currently working at the agency about company culture prior to accepting an offer. I’ve also learned it’s important to have a conversation with your manager early on to establish expectations regarding working outside of business hours. I very rarely work more than 40-42 hours per week, but there are definitely some busy weeks sprinkled throughout the year. MedThink’s management team is very supportive of employees prioritizing their wellbeing, and our benefits packages and flexible PTO complement that.