Job title: Data Analyst

Current employer: Edge Health UK

Sector: Healthcare Consultancy

Tell us about your current role and organisation

I am a data analyst for a start-up healthcare consultancy called Edge Health. We work primarily in the policy and administrative side of healthcare, offering both bespoke consultancy and software products. Using economics and data science, we help healthcare organisations in the NHS make better strategic, operational and planning decisions. For example, we have a product called SpaceFinder which uses machine learning to optimise theatre scheduling.

As a data analyst working at a small company, I work closely with our clients in the NHS. Based on their needs, I then have the opportunity to develop technical solutions with my team. Our solutions typically consist of some combination of a web application, model, and policy advice. At Edge, we work mainly in SQL and R.

What sort of person would this role suit? *(i.e. personal skills, qualities and values)*

This role would suit technically-minded individuals who are also excited about working on the ground to help NHS organisations with real operational and policy challenges.

What does a normal working day look like for you?

No day is exactly the same, but typically I will be doing some combination of coordinating with NHS analysts, cleaning/preparing raw data, data visualisation and modelling. I also sometimes travel around England to meet with our partners in the NHS.

How did you get to where you are now? *(i.e. what are the entry-level roles graduates would apply for to get where you are?)*

When I was doing my MSc in Health Economics in London a few years ago, I did an internship with Edge where I wrote my dissertation. From there I stayed on as a data analyst. Prior to Edge I had done internships and research assistant positions across health and technology.

How would you go about getting experience (*placements, work experience, internship*) in the industry you work in?

Relevant internships/work experiences are always a plus. This is somewhat standard advice but I would research companies of interest and keep an eye on university job boards. Even if some companies don't have formal internship schemes, there is nothing stopping you from getting in touch to express your enthusiasm for the company/potential role. When it comes to applying once you've found a role you're interested in, fewer applications with well thought-out cover letters can get you further than focusing on the volume of applications.

What are the biggest challenges you face in your work?

With large organisations like the NHS, adopting new technology and ways of working can take time. It is both challenging and rewarding to help organisations make these steps forward. Getting buy-in from analysts and staff at our partner organisations is crucial.

What's the progression like/where do you see yourself going from here?

We are a small but growing organisation, which is exciting. Progressing at Edge usually means getting more involved in project planning and management, and playing a closer role in working with senior NHS staff.

What top tips would you pass on to students interested in this type of work? *(i.e. any particular skills, knowledge, experiences, volunteering, extracurricular activities)*

I mentioned formal work experiences/internships earlier, but especially when it comes to roles that involve data analysis and coding, having done independent projects on topics that you find interesting is a great way of showing your skills and enthusiasm.