

Job title: Health Information Officer
Current employer: World Cancer Research Fund
Sector: Charity



Tell us about your current role and organisation.

The charity champion's the latest and most authoritative scientific research from around the world on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity.

My role sits in the communications and health information (HI) team. It is a very varied role but essentially requires me to manage our publications and cookbooks we produce for the public (and for health professionals to use with their patients). As part of this, I manage the whole process, from writing and researching content for the publication to working with the design team to bring it to life, to working with comms on how we best communicate it externally (for example twitter chats). I have to continuously think of ideas for new and engaging content as well. I am also responsible for the recipe section of the website as well, I have also got to work with some up and coming chefs (which can be very fun when you go to tasting and launch events) to produce cookbooks. As part of this process it requires me to analyse the recipes and advise any changes needed to meet our internal nutritional criteria. The last area I am responsible for is all of our HI online content, this extends to writing blogs, updating website content based on new research and/or new guidelines and always making sure what we say is evidence-based and is written with the audience in mind.

What sort of person would this role suit?

(i.e. personal skills, qualities and values)

It requires you to be a good people person as you are liaising with different people regularly. You need to be adaptable and able to juggle multiple things at once. It requires someone to be proactive, thinking of new ways to do things, very organised and who can generate new ideas (especially new content). As the role requires sometimes quite a bit of proofreading, being analytical, critical and having an excellent eye for detail are key traits as well.

What does a normal working day look like for you?

First thing I do is check my email alerts for any relevant news stories/ new reports of interest, it also involves doing a quick look at Twitter (the charity does a lot on this channel) and tweet anything relevant. To use today as an example, I worked on a publication report which I have been working on for a few weeks; this outlines what areas we need to expand into, and ideas for our future publications – within this is looking at how best to communicate, is it written, spoken, video etc - this is an exciting project to help us be at the forefront of creating really impactful HI content. I am also often asked by our comms team to comment on any relevant news stories (for example we had one today on the report of the results of the industry on reducing sugar), so you can often get your name in the paper as well. Today has also involved working with our design team on a new publication I am working on, this extends to deciding what goes where and how best you want things represented visually. Things can also often come out of the blue as

well, for example, news stories, or maybe the press have contacted us asking for a comment, but if you are good at managing your workload and time this is fine, but like I said, being an organised person is key. It can also involve checking stock levels of our publications and arranging for more to be printed when required. I also get asked to copy review other colleagues work.

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?)

Having gained extensive experience in the nutrition industry, making the move to outside of industry to a charity has been something I have wanted to do for a while. When this position came up (I also had an interest in nutrition and cancer as well), even though it was at a lower level than I would have wanted, but having done and experienced a lot already in the industry, going into a new area I knew that it would be very interesting and offer me a lot of scope to progress and for the type of work I would do, so I took the plunge. We have coordinator roles which are the entry-level roles, to officer level, to the potential to progress to head of your area.

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

Check their websites and social media channels as opportunities are often displayed there. However, this depends upon the size of the company as smaller companies may not show this information on their website. It never hurts to send a speculative email or letter as well. Companies like people to show proactiveness. Find out who the key people are in the organisation you are looking at (I have done this by contacting their HR person) and don't be afraid to reach out to them – more often than not they are willing to help, and potentially could lead to the offer of an internship/placement/work experience.

What are the biggest challenges you face in your work?

With being a very small team, you can sometimes come up with lots of great ideas, but often these have to be reigned back (or you just don't have the capacity time-wise to do them). So, you learn to take on what will be most impactful. I always keep my other ideas in my back pocket, just for times when they may be needed.

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

As I had to start at a lower position to where I had been previously, I was upfront and open with my manager about the desire to get back to at least the level I was previously (this was after my probation period – some charities/companies do this but not many), and due to the experience I bring to the role, I am being put forward to go straight to manager level at the next annual review. In a small organisation, there is more of an ability to stand out and progress (but that was partly down to me in finding what the scope for progression was). Being working here for only 6 months, I am still learning things, and as long as I can keep progressing and making a difference then it's a potential role I could be in for at least the next five years and potentially a lot longer.

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)

To follow any relevant charities/companies that are doing what you are doing, so you keep up to date with their research. Keeping up to date with what is going on in the general nutrition area is also vital, it shows to a potential employer your interest for the area and often allows you to answer questions easier at interview. But really, any good nutritionist should keep their knowledge up to date as a matter of course, especially as it's such a fast-moving science and things change all the time. The best bit of advice is never stop learning! With the job I do it involves a lot of writing, so getting experience with writing is a good idea, perhaps reach

out to people on social media/websites/magazines to see if you can write a blog for them. This experience will really stand out, it is also something extra to add to your CV. Charities like us do take interns, whilst this is unpaid they pay for travel and expenses etc. Again, having this on your CV is very favourable, it also helps you to stand out. Having a mentor is also an option, don't be afraid to reach out to people, if they don't have the time they will tell you, but if they are available then it represents a really good opportunity to gain experience and to potentially open the door to new opportunities. Lastly, is to do regular CPD, the Nutrition Society has some good ones. Also attending relevant conferences/events is a great way to network, meet new connections and find out the latest science; many are also CPD accredited now.