

HOW TO USE YOUR 10 DAYS CAREER DEVELOPMENT TIME – AN EXAMPLE:

Sophia is a postdoc in the field of medical imaging and joined the University of Leeds on a three year contract. This position is her second post doc, and she is now 12 months into her role. Sophia has settled in well; she has developed her technical expertise and she has become an established member of her team. Now that she has 24 months left on her contract, she is starting to think about her longer term career plans.

Recently, she has come across local med tech start-ups that build novel products in the field of medical imaging. She is curious to find out more, as the idea of turning her technical know-how into products that can improve medical diagnostics and patients' lives excites her.

She has always wanted to make an impact with her work. Reading about these new technologies and start-ups has made her think about her longer-term career direction. Although she really enjoys her research and being a postdoc, she doesn't want to limit herself to academia without at least having looked at alternatives. She also knows she can't stay a postdoc forever and realises how competitive fellowships or lectureships are.

Sophia has never been part of an industry collaboration, so she is curious about the difference of working in academia and in a commercial environment. And most importantly – would she enjoy working in industry? If she liked it, how would she make the transition away from academia at the end of her second postdoc?

Sophia decides to discuss her interest in start-ups at her annual career review with her PI. Her PI reminds her that she has 10 days' career development time a year and encourages her to use the time wisely to explore her longer-term career options.

Eventually, Sophia comes up with the following two-year career development plan that uses her annual 10 days' allowance. She will discuss her plans with her PI, as it will affect her research schedule over the coming months:

YEAR 1 CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN: WORK EXPERIENCE IN A LOCAL START-UP IN THE FIELD OF MEDICAL IMAGING

Allocation of the 10 Days:

- **2 days:** Identify and reach out to suitable companies for work-experience; arrange meetings and apply for placement. Once successful, agree the nature of the work experience placement with her host company, keep PI informed, arrange and sign contracts and confidentiality agreements.
- **7 days:** work placement spread over 7 weeks, with 1 day a week spent working on the agreed project in the host company.

- **0.5 days:** reflection on work experience and project outcomes - consolidate learning, record insights and think about next steps to maximise the placement experience.
- **0.5 days:** Present project results and learning outcomes at a joint session with the start-up and her department, to foster relationships and future collaborations between her, the tech-start-up and the university.

Whatever the outcome of her placement, Sophia wants to cover all her options and thinks ahead even further. This is what she has come up with, as a longer term plan:

YEAR 2 CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

Option A: Career development to transition into industry over the last 12 months of her post doc contract - IF Sophia enjoys her work experience and decides that moving into industry is a viable option for her.

Option B: If her work experience makes her want to stay in academia, she will focus all activities on securing a fellowship and pave the way for a longer-term career in academia.

OPTION A: TRANSITION INTO INDUSTRY - ALLOCATION OF THE 10 DAYS CAREER DEVELOPMENT TIME:

Aim: Become a strong candidate for moving into a product development role in the field of medical imaging (start-up of smaller sized company – SME)

0.5 day: Research job opportunities and make list of requirements to decide on professional development and activities to support the career transition at the end of the year 3 postdoc.

1 day: Study LinkedIn Learning Materials in OD&PL, position LinkedIn profile for commercial opportunities in digital imaging. Approach suitable professionals for LinkedIn recommendation.

4 days: Online certification in product development, recommended by her work placement organisation, via a MOOC with a reputable provider

1 day: Attend Innovation Management talks at Leeds Business School and tech start-up meetings to learn as much about tech start-up challenges and commercial environments.

1 day: Gather insights on med tech sector, especially in Medical Imaging field, via med tech information portals, twitter, LinkedIn, using appropriate hashtags.

2.5 days: Based on research, find a mentor and arrange six one-hour mentoring sessions, ideally with a mentor who works in the digital imaging sector in an SME or maybe even a start-up. Identify mentor through the University wide Mentoring project, personal contacts or through a

LinkedIn alumni search. Implement mentoring support for 6 mentoring sessions over the next 6 months to discuss career direction and move into industry.

Total: 10 days, spread out over one year.

The goal: At the end of the 10 days, Sophia has become confident that when she starts applying for industry opportunities, she is in a stronger position. She has learnt as much as possible about careers in med tech. She has added a relevant certification, increased her knowledge, nurtured her networks and gained practical experience through her work placement. All these activities have added to Sophia's credentials and shown her pro-active approach – which any prospective employer should be impressed by.

OPTION B: FOCUS ALL CAREER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ON SECURING A FELLOWSHIP SO SOPHIA CAN STAY IN ACADEMIA.

Although the work experience was very interesting, Sophia has decided that a move into industry is not for her (yet). She wants to continue doing research and decides to focus all her career development time on getting a fellowship.

1 Day: Read up on fellowship applications, identify suitable funders, talk to colleagues in department who succeeded in getting funding.

2 Days: Develop research ideas and discuss them with colleagues, then her PI.

1 Day: Attend OD&PL Fellowship application training.

6 Days: Write and refine Fellowship Application, based on feedback; then submit.

Total: 10 days, spread out over 6 weeks.

There are many ways that Sophia could have used her 10 days career development time, and you might have chosen a different approach to her career development. To assure you - there is no right or wrong here: what matters is that you use the time strategically, with a goal in mind. If you are clear about the focus and aim of your career development time, you will enjoy and benefit more than dipping in and out of disconnected learning activities that you come across by chance.

We hope that Sophia's example has stimulated your thinking and that it has encouraged you to plan your own career development activities. 10 days are a significant amount of time, use them wisely!

To your success, Ruth Winden & Dr Emma Spary