

Ken Lute

Department – Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center
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Title: Sr. Product Development Specialist

Institution / Company: Pharmaceutical Product Development, Inc. (PPDI), Morrisville, NC

Describe a typical day?

It's highly variable from project to project. Typically I'm reading, writing, researching, attending meetings, etc.

What do you enjoy most?

The breadth and brevity of what I do. I get a chance to work on a lot of different projects and the scope of work is huge.

What are some of the challenges?

You have to be accepting of change and a lack of ownership.

What is the biggest misconception about your career field?

Ignorance is a bigger problem. I just don't think many post-docs are aware of what clinical research organizations do. Drug development is a very complex phenomenon and it takes a while to get your head around it.

Based on your experience, how is industry different than academia?

It's highly regulated and much more sensitive to time and money.

How did you find out about your current position?

Found it on the company's website. I applied and got a call, but then didn't hear anything. A month later I went to a networking event and introduced myself to a director at that company and she put me in touch with the hiring manager directly. That got me back in the loop.

What strategies or resources did you find most helpful during your job search?

I started off by speaking with Dara at OPA. She helped me identify what I did and didn't like about my work and also helped me put together my resume. She provided me with literature from the OPA, which helped me become more informed about different career opportunities. Also I highly recommend going to networking events and sitting in on the OPA Post Doc Alumni panel sessions. I used the web to find a lot of information concerning interviewing and business etiquette.

Looking back on your time as a postdoc or your job search, what do you wish you would have done differently?

Started networking and preparing for interviews sooner. I had never prepared much for interviews in the past because I thought I was good at interviewing. Not true. It takes practice and eventually I realized that it doesn't make sense to sit in front of the computer night after night applying for jobs, and not put equal effort into the interview.

What career planning and/or job search advice do you have for current postdocs interested in your career field?

I think the importance of networking cannot be overstated. I went into my job search thinking it was a numbers game, the more resumes I send out the better my chances of finding a job. This is true in part, but I think the biggest edge you can give yourself is to seek out and maintain network contacts.

Additionally, it is very important to know the field you are trying to get into and how your education and training fits in. This is especially true if you are trying to move into a new field. Have a very

well thought out answer as to why you have done what you've done in the past and how that relates to what you are pursuing now. You should come across as focused and full of purpose.