

Where are the SAS® Jobs?

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ABSTRACT

Who is hiring? The hiring trends have shifted in the past several years for Pharmaceutical, Biotechnology and Clinical Research Organizations. Functional Service Provider models have grown throughout the years and are showing strong results. This paper outlines the different job options for a SAS® professional. They will be enlightened on trends happening in the industry and why employers outsource their work. The information provided will give insight and challenge the professional to navigate towards aligning themselves with these potential companies.

INTRODUCTION

Today, if you go on Indeed or Career Builder and search for SAS programming jobs in Clinical Research Organizations, Pharmaceutical or Biotech companies, you will see that there are over 1000 open jobs available in the United States. Companies in these industries are continuously adding to their teams. Per *Business News Daily*, 36 percent of employers plan to increase their permanent head count in 2015. 45 percent of companies are saying they are planning to hire more temporary or contract workers in 2015. The clinical trial industry is ever changing and this paper highlights the trends for 2015. As you look at the different job opportunities within various segments of the industry, only you can know if it is your ideal position. This could be a position within a Clinical Research Organization, Pharmaceutical or Biotechnology company, or even a contract position through an Employment Agency.

The business of commercial drug development is always changing. There are mergers and acquisitions happening in Clinical Research Organizations, Pharmaceutical, and Biotech companies. These are done for a reason, whether it is to get a new compound, take a drug trial to new heights, or gain headcount globally. They are all to bring an effective drug to market. In 2014, 44 drugs were approved by the FDA to go to the market. It was an 18 year high, since the all-time record in 1996. SAS professionals contribute to the approval process by reporting the clinical trial data, this helps companies take those drugs to market, and ultimately changing people's lives.

CAREER OPTIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Clinical Research Organizations, better known as CROs, provide support to pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device companies in the form of research services outsourced on a contract basis. Currently there are over 1,100 CROs globally. Many times CROs are contracted to do part of a study, whether that be drug safety, monitoring, or in our case, SAS programming. Many times clients reach out to CRO's to acquire specific expertise, without needing to hire more permanent staff. CROs have dedicated SAS professionals that are able to compute or create the tables, listings, and figures needed. When working in a CRO, many times SAS professionals are asked to work with numerous sponsors at one time on multiple occasions. According to Nice Insight's 2015 "Pharmaceutical and Biotechnology Outsourcing Survey," 63 percent of global sponsors outsource their research and development to global CROs in emerging markets. This is a 68 percent increase from the 2014 survey, where only 43 percent reported outsourcing to these markets. In addition, 88 percent of sponsors today will consider working with a CRO in an emerging market, a 4 percent increase from 2014.

Many of the CROs are turning to a Functional Service Provider Model, or FSP, where their SAS programmers have the ability to be dedicated to one client. The clients, pharmaceutical, biotech, or medical device companies, have a devoted team to do the programming work. In FSP models, the structure and scope of work is defined by the client. The clients put out a master service agreement with the CRO, which then allows the company to know what is to be

expected during the time they are under contract. Working on an FSP model has many positive aspects, for both the employee and the client. On numerous occasions, programmers are able to work remotely. Many FSP employees are able to achieve a balance between work and life when only dedicated to one sponsor. They know what is to be expected of them during the full range of the project. In addition, there are also excellent career growth opportunities that can occur. Many times FSPs are put into place to help with submissions. The client benefits from having a dedicated resource concentrating on only their studies, therefore, improving productivity and decreasing costs, while the individual is gaining valuable knowledge in start-up and submission work.

Another option to consider is Pharmaceutical and Biotechnology companies. These can be very similar, but are categorized differently. The primary difference being by which method these drugs are produced. The term "Pharmaceutical," is defined as a company that develops, produces, and markets drugs for use as medications through plant and chemical based compounds. This can consist of generic brand drugs or devices. Pharmaceutical companies get funding from large public sectors and private investors. On the other hand, Biotechnology companies use living systems and organisms to develop or create their products. Both companies can also be characterized by long development lead times. It can take as much as a decade to transition new drugs from a lab to a pharmacy. Comparatively, both industries employ full-time staff, interns, and contractors. The job responsibility of the SAS professional in a pharmaceutical/biotechnology field is similar to that of the CRO employee. However the individual could be assigned specific project based work or even specific therapeutic areas. Additionally, a notable difference is that you will be utilizing one main type of system or process.

A role with a placement agency is another type of position. A placement agency is a type of agency that places professionals on contract assignments for a designated term at a specific rate and particular client (pharma, biotech or CRO). The agency acting as the employer pays the employer an hourly rate, offering straight pay or one that includes benefits. Independent Consultants are another component of staffing. The individual is providing a service to the client, as specified in a legal contract. This requires the contractor to have a company established, client paying them an hourly rate without benefits. The independent consultant is paying Self Employment taxes (primarily Social Security and Medicare taxes) and has the ability to write off expenses.

CONCLUSION

As a professional, you have to identify what you desire as you grow in your career. To do this you need to establish what is important for you and your family. There are several questions you can ask yourself including: Is this work life balance? Do you need to work from home or need flexible hours? Are you looking for career growth in an organization? Do you want to become a manager, or mentor junior staff? By answering these questions, you can start evaluating positions in your area and find those that would be a fit for you. Initially search the job boards (Indeed, Career Builder, Monster, etc.). Proceed by connecting with Recruiters, Agencies or Headhunters that specialize in clinical trial development. Talk with your friends, colleagues and former colleagues to build your network and use tools such as LinkedIn. By doing so, you indirectly learn more about the companies they work for and the pros and cons that come with each position. Referrals can be the best way to find a position. Ironically, you will occasionally find that the best jobs are the ones not posted. Remember to join SAS User groups while also following companies of interest. And lastly, attend conferences, write papers, and invest in yourself as a professional. Effort will always produce results. It is obvious that there are many SAS opportunities available, but keep in mind that only you yourself can find the best!

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