

PSI General Profile Competition

Winning entry:

Dave, MDS Pharma Services



A little over 6 years ago now I had given very little thought as to what my career would entail. Whilst studying for my A-Levels at school I knew that I would probably do what all my friends were doing and head to university. At this point in life I had no intention of entering the real world and start working! I knew that, since I was no Lawrence Dallaglio, playing rugby, which was my main love in life, was not a realistic career. I also knew that Maths was my strongest subject and also the one I enjoyed most but I could not imagine myself doing this for the rest of my life. I keep hoping that one day I might bump into my old Maths teacher just to see what his reaction is to me working in statistics. He might even see me as one of his success stories!

So how did I become a Biostatistician? Well the simple answer is I just kind of fell into it. Early in my second year at uni I realised that, to keep funding my active social life, I needed more money than I currently had with just my student loan. On this basis I decided to take part in a placement year. Once again I had very little idea what I wanted to do but fortunately for me, my careers adviser was used to dealing with people like me and soon set me up with an interview at Quintiles. Now, before that interview I could have written all the information I knew about the pharmaceutical industry on a back of a postage stamp and could still have room left over for me to list all the Beethoven's hits I know! Despite this, I got the job as a Trainee Biostatistician thus giving me my first taste of working life.

This year in industry gave me a much better idea of what to expect in both the Pharmaceutical world and working life in general. I didn't know what to expect from this year but I found that I was putting some of my knowledge from uni to good use and I started to learn about the SAS language from scratch. This also gave me ideas about what I wanted to do in the immediate future.

Having finished my placement year I went back to uni to complete my degree with a renewed enthusiasm. It was not long before I decided that, because I enjoyed my placement year and the work involved, I would look into continuing in that industry. As a result and after a number of recommendations I trekked down to Southampton to partake in their MSc Statistics course. Thus followed another year of lectures, exams, studying hard and late nights / beer, bar crawls, beans on toast and turning up to early morning lectures with heavy hangovers!

Having finally left uni, over five years after first starting, I landed myself a position at MDS Pharma Services working as a Biostatistician, rejoining the CRO world. I settled into the company very quickly and soon found myself getting to know people from other

departments, not just from statistics. This was helped by MDS having their Christmas ball on the first Friday after I started and by getting involved with the FAST (Fun And Socialising Together) group. As I was working within a small group of statisticians I soon started working on a number of projects in different areas such as Oncology and Neurology.

Having been with MDS for just four months so far I have already been involved in my first Blind Review Meeting (BRM) which has given me a much better idea of how the populations of a study are agreed upon and was also my first meeting with a client. I have also already attended the YSS Launch Party and attended the PSI event on Subgroup Analysis all of which have given me the chance to get to know other statisticians as well as to further my knowledge.

So far I have enjoyed my time with MDS and look forward to the next few years and the challenges that lay ahead. The only downside is that I keep finding various ways of spelling biostatistician and the reaction I get on a night out when I tell people I'm a statistician- it doesn't tend to impress the girls!