

Career Insights

with comments from Lucy Randle, STAR Medical



Geoff Simpson is Sales Force Recruitment Advisor for Napp Pharmaceuticals. He has worked in this role and for this company for eight years. We asked Geoff to reveal the secrets of recruitment . . .



What do you enjoy about working in HR?

The modern HR department has to be dynamic as well as supportive. Providing good advice is important, but instigating change is exciting, and that's what I like.

What do you find challenging?

In two words, time management. Each RBM sees their vacancy as the most important, and wants action immediately. With an average of five or six vacancies at any one time, it is vital that I work with equal vigour on each of them.

What are the key attributes you look for when recruiting representatives?

Our representatives are sales people, and are employed to sell. Therefore, their ability to sell is paramount. Experienced representatives should be able to demonstrate convincingly that they are well above average. I also believe that a 'persuasive' personality is vital within sales, in much the same way that a

naturally funny person can tell the best jokes. Selling skills can be taught of course, which means it is personality that becomes the more important at interview. However, there are numerous other qualities that are just as important, such as drive, tenacity and work ethic. Additionally, we recruit against our four core values of Respect, Innovation, Honesty and Passion. Finally, we want employees who seek a win/win relationship and who appreciate that 'give and take' have to be in equal measure.

What advice would you give to a potential candidate?

Firstly, make sure your CV is as impressive as the facts allow. I often read CVs that focus on experience, but forget to mention achievements. Secondly, come to the interview fully prepared to ask some searching questions of your own. The relationship between employer and employee has to be a good fit, and I am always impressed when candidates ask "What can you do for me?" Thirdly, prepare a convincing brag file. You are bound to be asked for evidence to support your claims, so have it ready. And lastly, enjoy the interview.

Your brag file is the key to a successful interview. Lucy Randle offers some top tips on preparing the best possible brag file:

Why bother with a brag file?

Just like the sales aids you use in a call, your brag file should be a tool that helps to sell YOU and maximise your impact in the interview. It should provide evidence to support your achievements and abilities, and should be tangible proof to back up your career highlights to date.

What should a brag file contain?

1. Certificates/documentation – Make sure you include your ABPI and degree certificates, and that they are presented well. You should also incorporate your driving licence (and maybe your passport too). Leaving the interviewer with copies of these certificates/documents is often a good idea. A word of caution, though: don't go overboard – it's unlikely that your cycling proficiency certificate will really swing the interview!

2. Feedback – Quality feedback from internal and external customers can be extremely powerful. Appraisals, performance reviews and results of 360° feedback should help to communicate your key strengths. Testimonials and letters/cards from customers will help to endorse how you achieve the sales results you deliver.

3. League tables – To prove you are better than the other candidates, you need to demonstrate beyond doubt that you are better than all (or certainly

most) of your current colleagues. Working in a sales environment, you should therefore be able to show where you are in the league tables on sales (volume, growth, market share etc.) and activity (vs. Walsh average, company average etc.) The key here is that you must choose the data well in order to demonstrate consistency and not 'one-off results'. It is vital, too, that you understand the data inside and out. There is nothing worse than being caught out by the interviewer because you've misread the axes on the sales charts!

4. Evidence of winning – If you have joined the 'All Stars' club or been on the 'Academy' trip, you should shout this from the rooftops. When referring to incentive programme success, make sure the evidence you use shows clearly what you won, why it was important to you and how you ensured that the prize was going to be yours.

Finally: brag files should be used as a tool to support your selling – so just as with a sales aid, make sure you use it appropriately. Think about how to organise the contents such that the material is ordered logically. You should be so familiar with it that you can easily dip into and out of it to support and demonstrate the point you are trying to make. Endless rifling through disorganised bits of paper is extremely frustrating for any interviewer. The dictionary definition of **brag** is 'to talk boastfully' – so make sure your file helps you to do so!

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