



How to Know If a Medical Science Liaison (MSL) Career Is Right for You?

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Outline

- **My journey**
- **How did I decide to become an MSL**
- **What is an MSL?**
- **What is an average day for an MSL?**
- **How is success of an MSL measured?**
- **Top 5 tips for transitioning into an MSL role**
- **5 transferrable skills you already have!**



My Journey

It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.

- **Graduate School – 2003-2007**
- **Post Doc – 2007-2008**
- **Post Doc – 2008-2011**
- **Obama checks – 2011-2012**
- **Post Doc – 2012-2015**

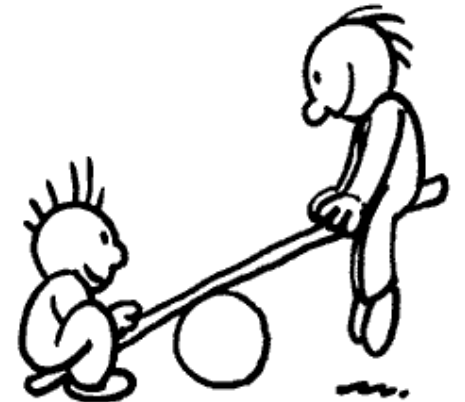


Leaving Academia

Industry

Academia

Money
Family
Passion and Drive
Independence
Career Progression
Job Security
Human Interaction
Respect



Leaving Academia

Meaningful Work



Money



Leaving Academia

Average MSL Salary, by Experience Level and Company Size: 2014

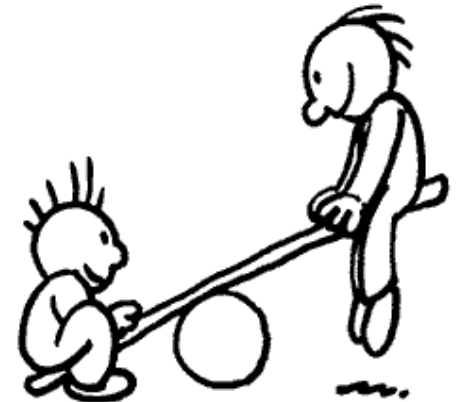


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How did I decide to become an MSL?

- **MSL position is not right for everyone – there has to be a strong match between your personality and values**
- **You need to understand yourself and what you want**
- **You need to understand how other people see you**
- **How do we get these answers?**
 - **THROUGH FEEDBACK**
 - **Eg. What professional strengths are you rewarded for time and time again in your current role**
 - **If you are unsure – ask your friends, colleagues, family, and superiors**

**"SUCCESS IN THE KNOWLEDGE
ECONOMY COMES TO THOSE WHO
KNOW THEMSELVES—THEIR STRENGTHS,
THEIR VALUES, AND HOW THEY BEST
PERFORM."**

- Peter Drucker

What is an MSL?

- **Specific role within the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, and other health-care industries. MSLs have advanced scientific training and academic credentials generally consisting of a doctorate degree (Ph.D., PharmD., M.D.) in the life sciences**
- **The purpose of an MSL is to be a scientific or disease state expert both for internal colleagues, including sales and marketing, and for doctors in the therapeutic area of the medical community in which they work**
- **The primary responsibility of an MSL remains to establish and maintain peer-to-peer relationships with leading doctors who influence other doctors. These influential doctors are commonly referred to as key opinion leaders (KOLs).**

What is an MSL – How are we different from sales?

- “Medical science liaisons (MSLs), who are **considered medical rather than sales staff**, have greater freedom than salespeople as they visit doctors offices to **discuss the science behind a medicine, including unapproved uses**. The FDA permits drug companies to respond to unsolicited requests for information from doctors, including off-label data, if they **provide truthful, nonpromotional material**, says Rita Chappelle, an agency spokeswoman. And while the FDA requires traditional sales reps to refer information requests to their employers' medical or scientific staff, MSLs are usually on those staffs.”
- “I see them as primarily being in a position to give us information and educational support,” says Robert Sundel, a physician at Children's Hospital Boston and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School. “While they're **generally objective**, as with everyone, I try to keep track of the ways in which their own interests might affect the information they provide.”

An 'Average' Day for an MSL

Travel

Conference calls

- Scientific Training
- Operations Training
- Organizational/Strategy

Scientific Meeting

An Average Day

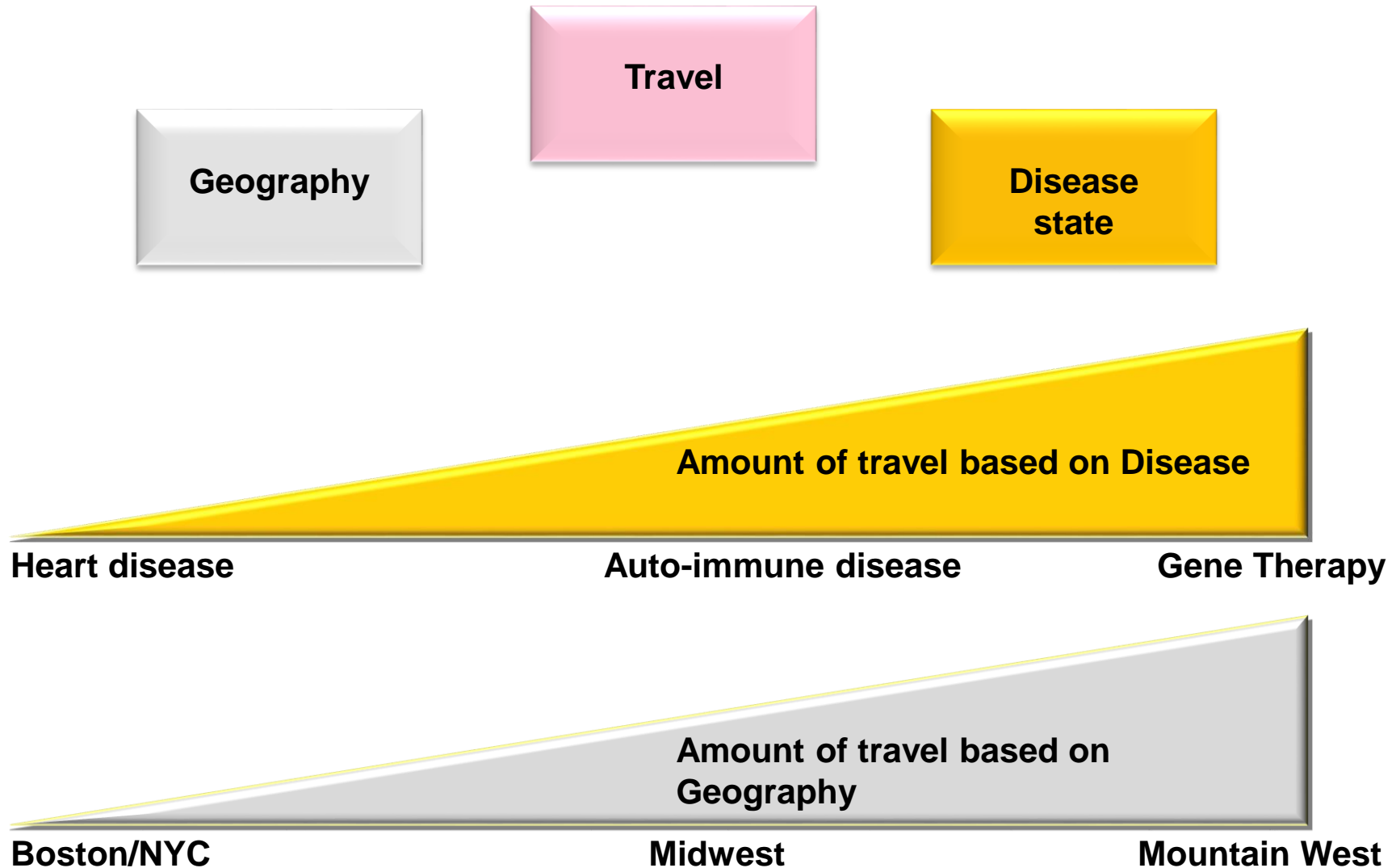
Interactions with Sales

- Support (MIRFs)
- Scientific Training

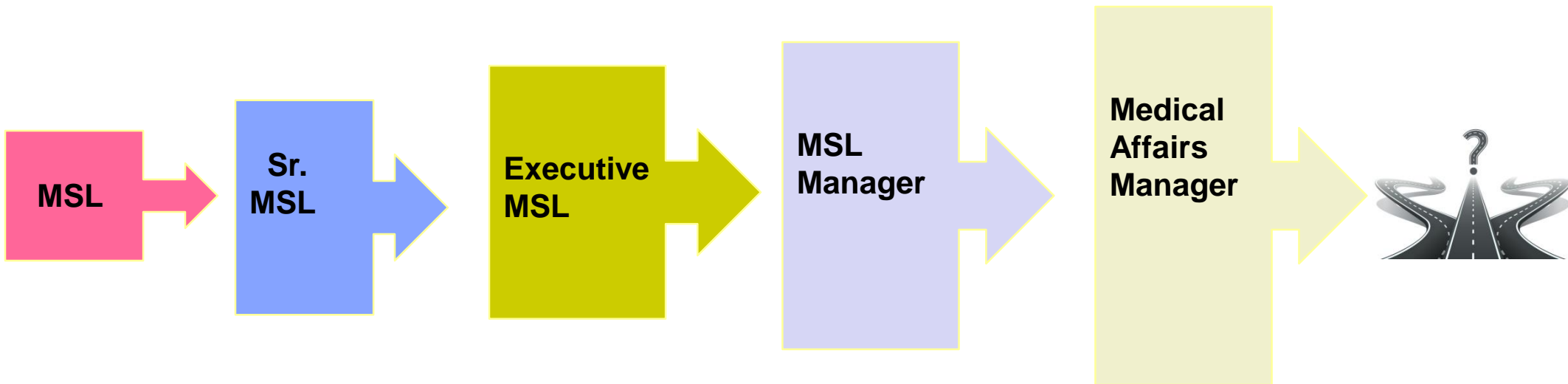
KOL Appointments

- Data updates
- Speaker training
- Clinical trial discussions
- Scientific presentation to a panel

...But how much does an MSL travel?



Success of an MSL and Career Progression



Are there shortcuts?

I want to transition – how do I do it?

- According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, medical professions such as MSL roles are among the **fastest growing industries** between 2012 and 2022
- In Dr. Samuel Dyer's book How to Break into Your First MSL Role, the companies hiring new MSLs **slightly favor hiring PhDs over PharmDs** (30.9% and 30.1%, respectively)
- The keys to transitioning into your first MSL role will be **networking** and aligning your transferable skills as well as your **disease state expertise** with this career choice

5 other things you must do to transition into a medical liaison job in industry

1. Take advantage of scientific conferences

- Do not go to talks
- The key to accessing MSLs at conferences will be networking at the vendor show.
- Find a sales rep and ask them an off-label question

2. Set up informational interviews with MSLs with a background similar to yours

- Specifically, look for MSLs who also have a PhD, are in their first industry role after academia, or are in a similar therapeutic area as your field of study
- To increase the chances of hearing a response to your LinkedIn messages, be sure your profile is up-to-date and tailored specifically for the MSL role you want
- Use informational interviews to not only build connections, but to learn which company is the right fit for you

3. Find MSLs within your geographical vicinity and within your therapeutic area

- Reach out to physicians, sales reps who are employed in your therapeutic area
- For example, if you have a background in immunology, seek out physicians who prescribe similar biologic medicines, such as rheumatologists, oncologists, and gastroenterologists

5 other things you must do to transition into a medical liaison job in industry

4. Strengthen relationships by following up and tightening the networking loop

- Connecting with MSLs and professionals in relevant therapeutic areas is not enough
- Constantly Add Value
- You can do this by sending them interesting journal articles, tidbits from the Internet pertaining to their career, or questions that would get them to share their expertise
- Know WHY you want to be an MSL
- No matter how terrible your academic experience is – show excitement for your projects
- Be able to explain it in a few sentences

5. Approach every interaction and obstacle as an opportunity to gain experience, learn, and move forward

- Become an expert in that disease state/therapeutic area (shadowing physicians?)
- Start learning about current clinical trials in your disease state (ie Clinicaltrials.gov)
- Start learning about how FDA regulates pharma-doctor interaction (ie the Sunshine Act)

Are there shortcuts?

5 Transferable skills you **already** have which will help you transition into an MSL position

1. An outgoing and optimistic personality

- Having an outgoing and optimistic personality is crucial to maintaining the extensive communication networks consisting of KOLs and sales reps
- Think of positivity as a kind of lubricant for these networks
- By focusing on solutions and finding more and more ways to add value for others, you'll keep these networks open and flowing smoothly

2. The ability to convey scientific information briefly, clearly, and precisely

- Sometimes you only have 3-5 minutes to deliver critical data to clients at all levels of an organization
- Showing that you can deliver information intelligibly and without jargon will gain you tremendous respect with your clients

3. High levels of emotional intelligence, or EQ

- The ability to assess the moods of your client is instrumental to your success as an MSL

5 Transferable skills you **already** have which will help you transition into an MSL position

4. High levels of internal motivation

- Not every physician will be happy to see you
- Remember that most people will NOT understand the value you can offer them right away. So, give them the benefit of the doubt
- Be patient with people and your patience will pay off. This is something your PhD has prepared you for extensively — patiently and consistently trying again and again after a seemingly endless string of failures

5. Ability ask questions and listening

- It is NEVER about you – it is ALWAYS about the physician and his patients
- What are his clinical interests? What do they think about this data? What has their experience been with this particular drug?
- Use your scientific skills to dig in and develop questions that physicians will want to respond to.
- The most successful MSLs are not those who talk the most, but those **who ask the best questions**

Summary

- **MSL roles allow you to engage in scientific and cutting-edge discussions on drug therapy and disease states with leading health care providers in both academic and community-based settings**
- **Transitioning into an MSL position requires strategic thinking**
- **Any PhD can align their strengths to successfully obtain an MSL position**



YOU CAN DO IT



Thank you



Questions?

