



The agency perspective  
Vicky Lawson, Darwin

12 January 2017

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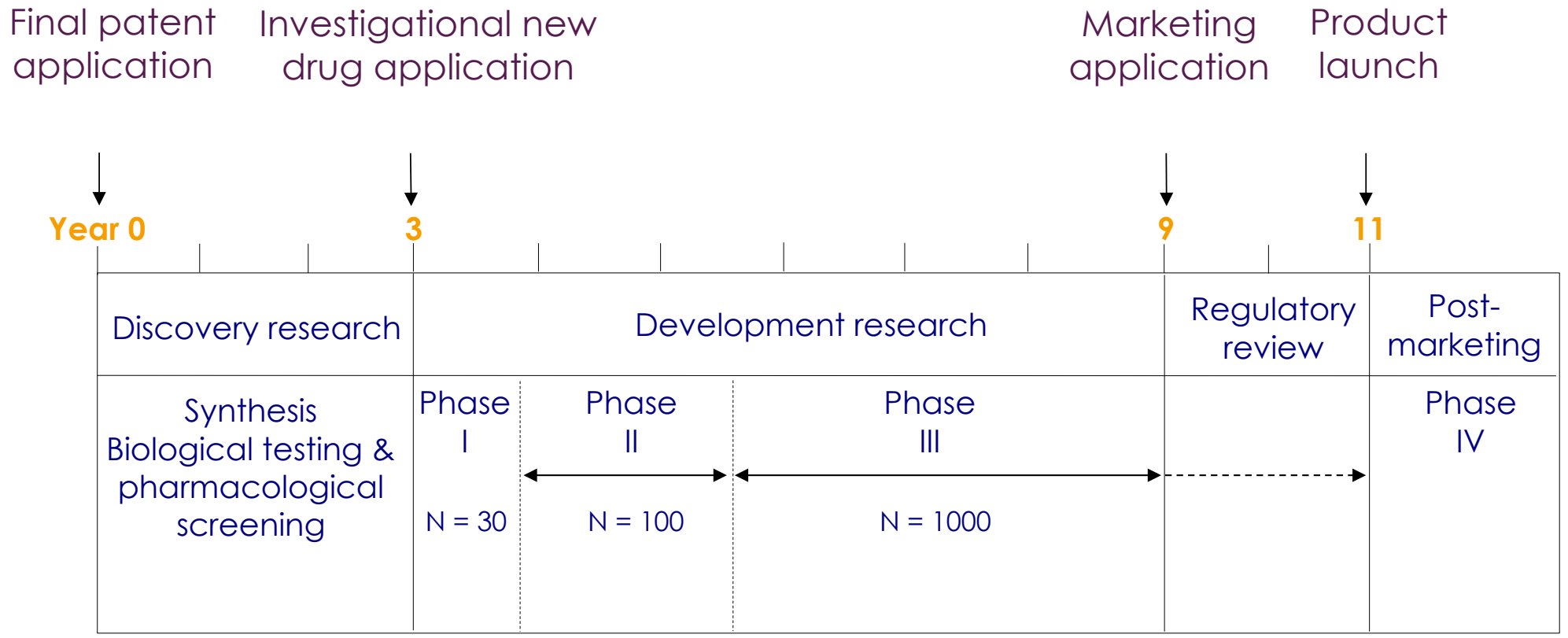
What is medical communications?

## What is medical communications?

Communication of medical/scientific information to healthcare professionals, most often around a particular disease or a specific drug, and generally on behalf of a pharmaceutical company



# When is med comms needed?



**10,000**  
substances



**1**  
new medicine

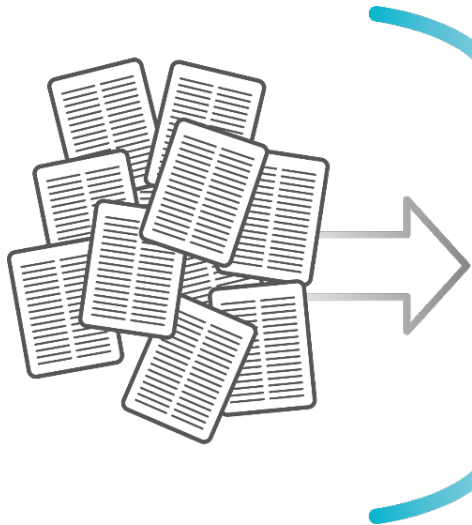


# What does med comms look like?



# Medical communication: from strategy to tactics

Raw data/lead manuscripts



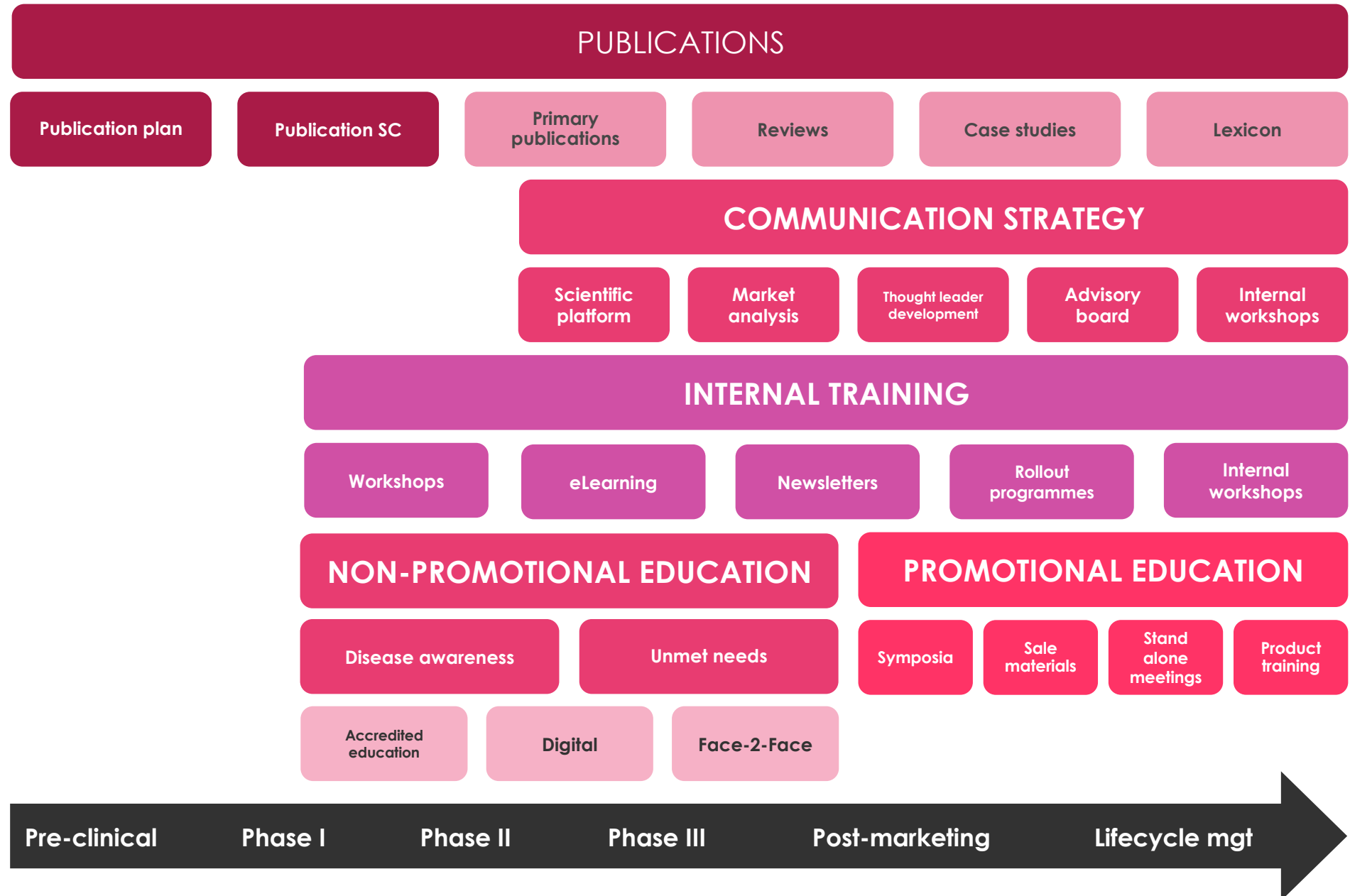
Weighing and planning strategic communication approach



Tactical implementation

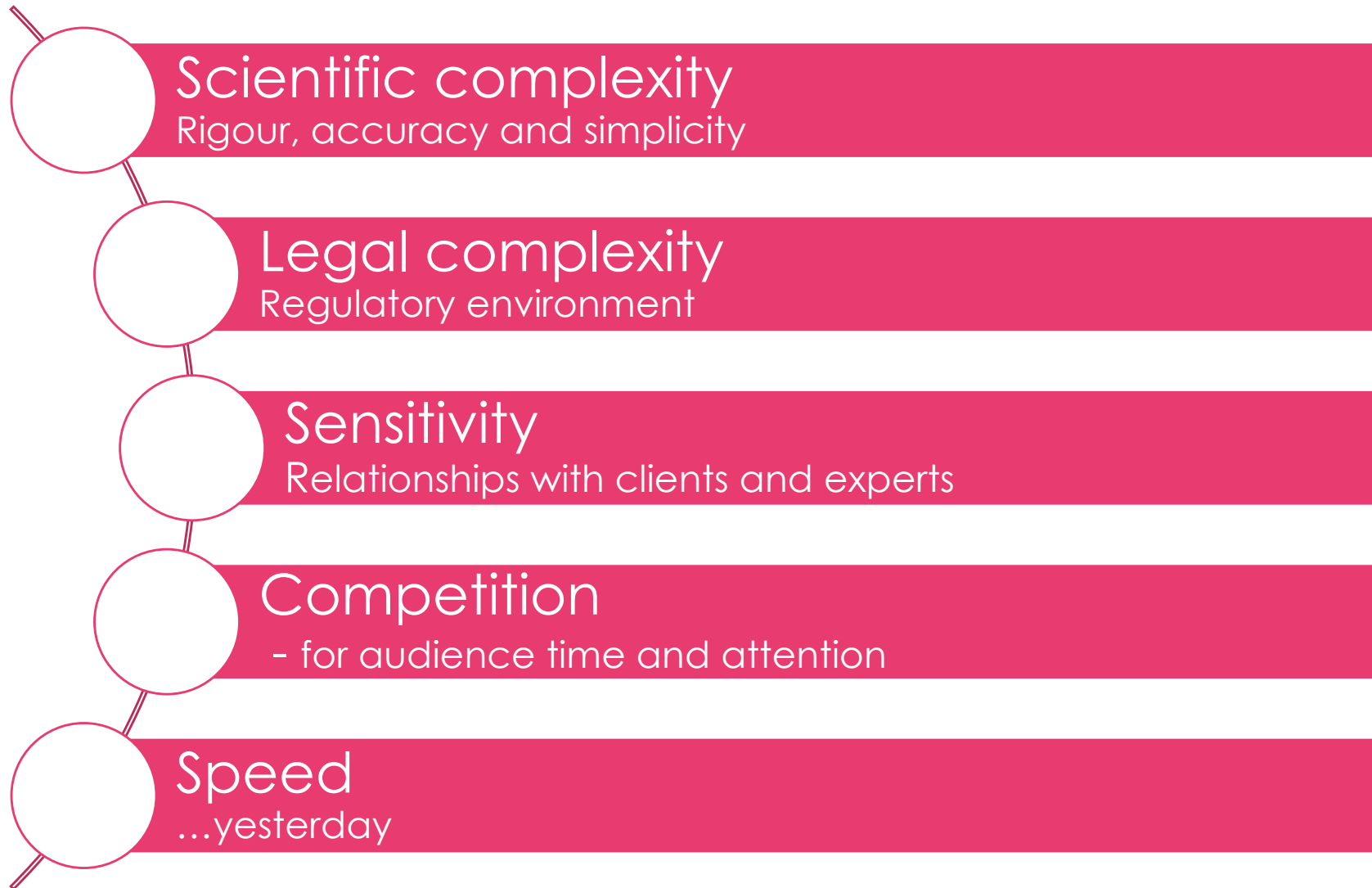


# Medical communication: a snapshot





# Challenges



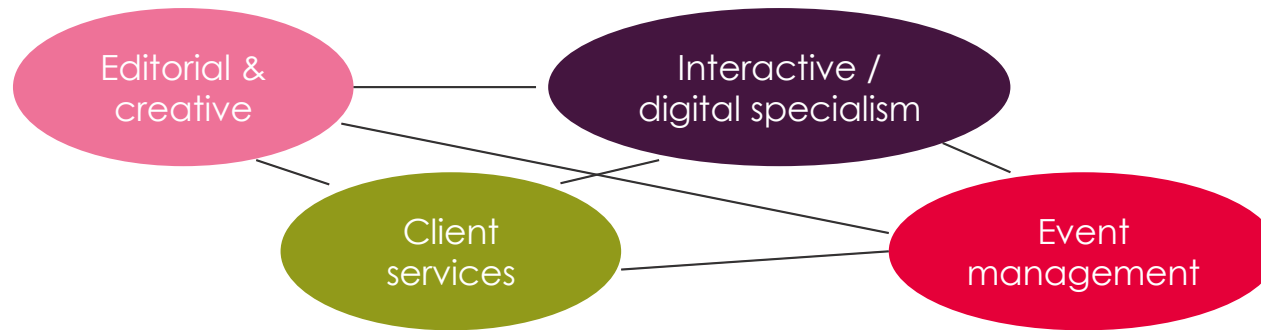


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Why might you like a career in med comms?

# Why might you want to join an agency?

- Opportunities to
  - work with global experts in their field
  - work in a wide range of therapy areas
  - help to create materials for different audiences
  - travel
  - experience different job roles



- Fast-paced, challenging and never dull!
-

# Events at Darwin: an example of a 12-month period

**186**  
Speaking faculty

**249**  
presentations

**46**  
advisory boards

**12**  
symposia

**12**  
standalones

# Training

Medical communications agencies offer opportunities for training:

- Formal training arranged with external experts
    - Presentation training
    - CMPP training
    - Code of practice training (ABPI, EFPIA)
    - Negotiation skills training
  - Mentoring – on-going training from colleagues
  - Internal training – offered by colleagues, these might be lunch and learn-style sessions, challenge ‘surgeries’ to share best practice and experiences from other accounts
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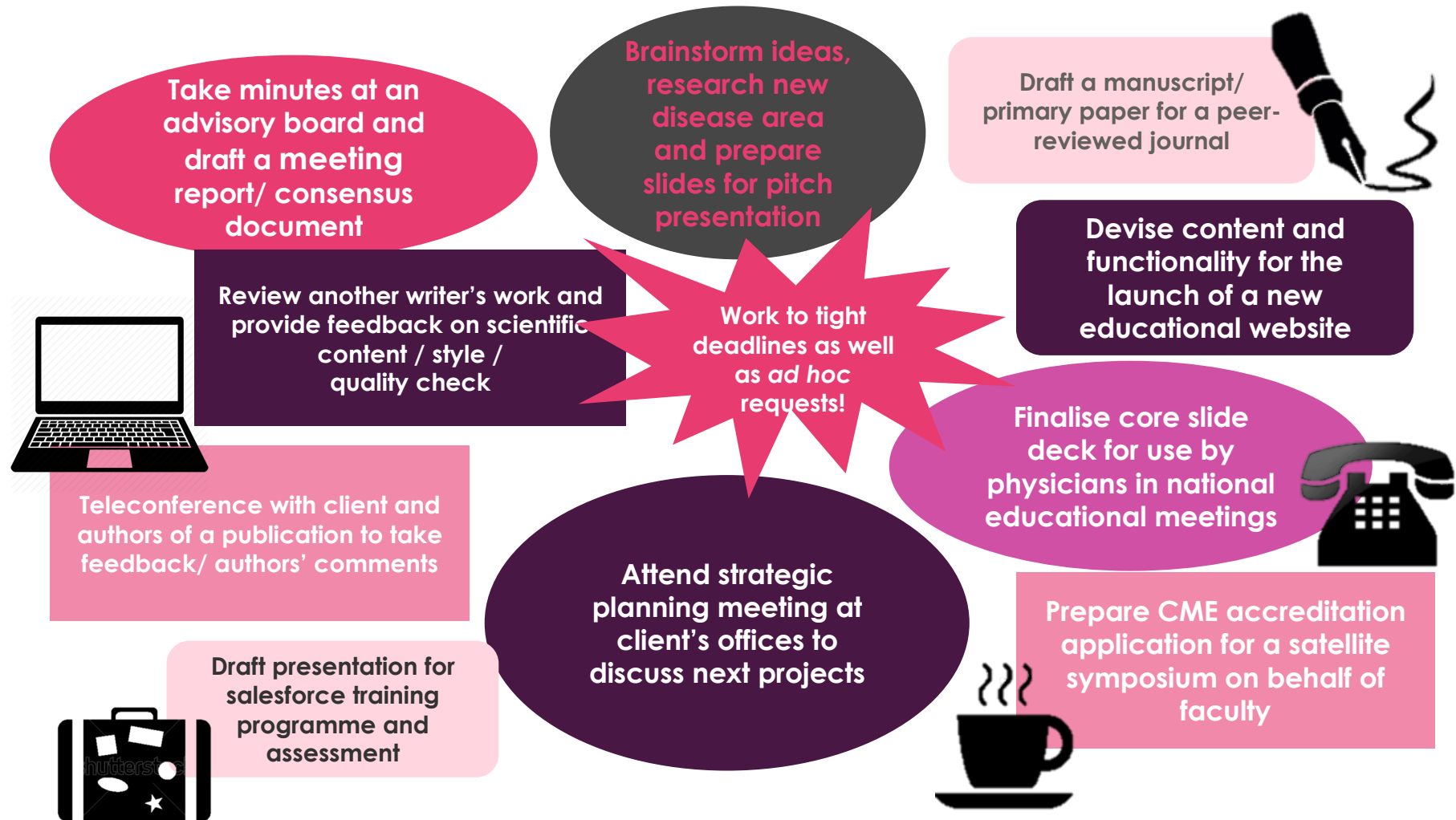
## The role of a medical writer

## A typical day for a medical writer

...there isn't one!



# A typical day for a medical writer could include





# My day yesterday as a medical writer

- 8:30 write up notes from a client face-to-face meeting 2 days ago
  - 9:00 find out someone has rearranged their holiday, and I have to brief a speaker later in the day. Have a biscuit
  - 10:00 conduct an appraisal for a junior writer
  - 11:00 decide what to do for the rest of the day
  - 11:10 send some slide work over to another writer and answer their questions
  - 11:20 start working on a deck of slides for a standalone meeting
  - 11:30 interrupted by some emails about referencing to data on file
  - 11:35 continue with slides
  - 12 ish lunch *al desco*
  - 13:30 prep for...
  - 2:00 a call with a new client – we are going to Sweden next week to see them, it seems
  - 2:45 continue with slides
  - 3:30 speaker doesn't turn up to their briefing call. Rejoice at extra half hour
  - 5:30 finish slides and pass them to our editor, forget to complete timesheet, go home
-

## What do agencies look for in a medical writer?

Someone who

- Has a **science background** – a PhD is an advantage but it is not mandatory
- **Enjoys writing** and has a talent for it
- Is able to **digest new information** rapidly
- Has good **desktop research** skills
- Has a '**can do**' attitude and is willing to have a go at most things
- Enjoys working with others as **part of a team**
- Has good attention to **detail**
- Presentation skills
- Can think of **new ideas** that will be useful to the client
- Is willing to travel and work **flexibly**
- **Takes feedback** from others well

**The ability to deliver what the client wants, on time and on budget!**

# My route into med comms





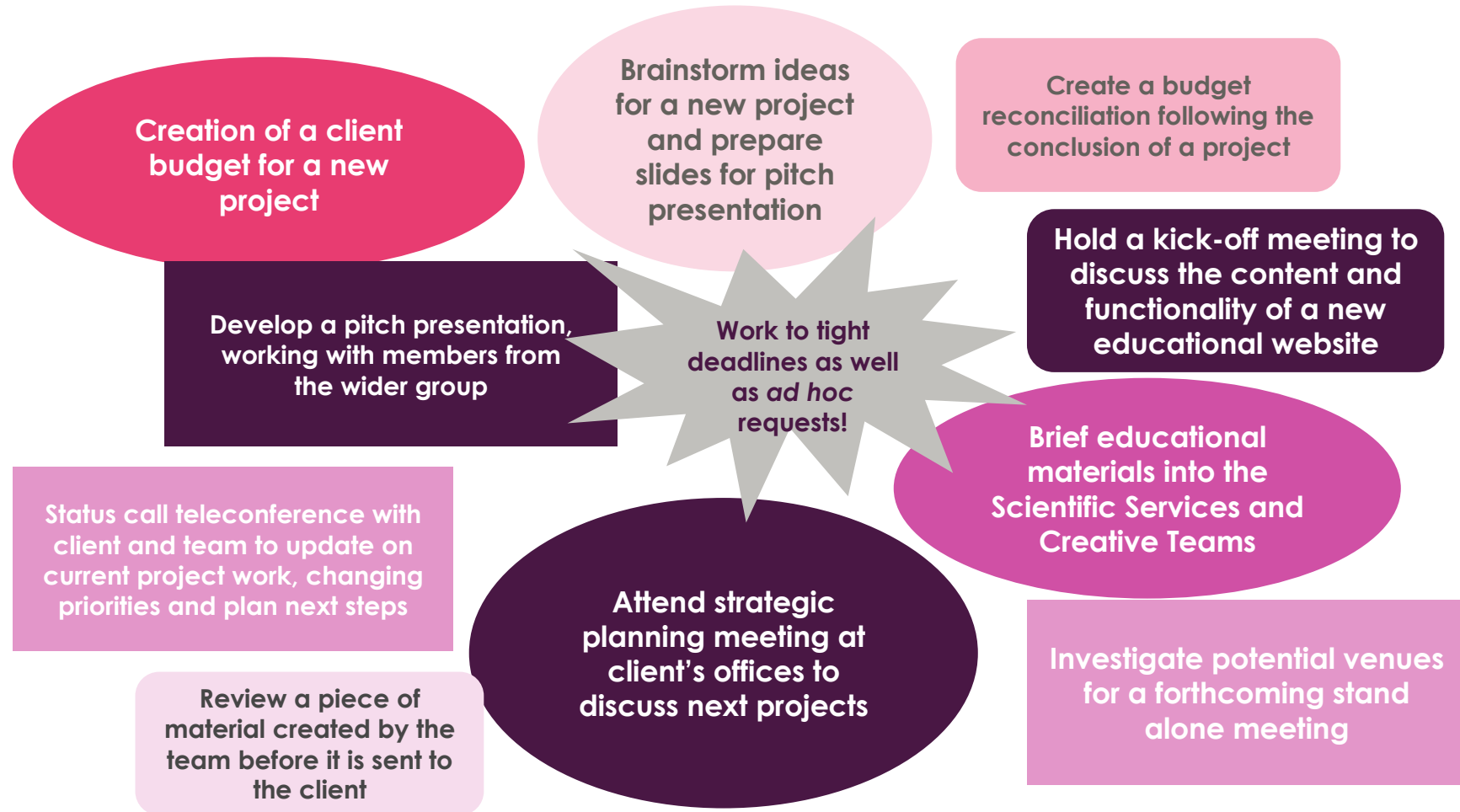
The Client Service Team

## A typical day for one of the Client Services Team

...there isn't one!



# A typical day in client services could include



# A typical day rarely goes as planned

(borrowed from my client services colleague)

## What I planned to do

1. Write list 😊
2. Finish proposal for client X
3. Finish budget for proposal
4. Draft slides for careers event
5. Attend internal account status call at 2pm
6. Attend client call at 3.30pm
7. Complete appraisal form for colleague
8. Review budget status for account Y
9. Review advertising schedule for account Y and make recommendations to client to go through 2016
10. Liaise with stand builders to obtain design and cost estimate

## What I ended up doing

1. Write list 😊
2. Get half way through proposal for client X – who then calls to discuss current project, asks for extra work to be done that we thought he was going to do
3. Scramble to find resource to accommodate the client X request in order to maintain timelines
4. Get involved in taking on part of task – we're a team, divide and conquer!
5. Attend internal status call
6. Get a bit more done on proposal for client X
7. Receive a barrage of confusing emails from one of the client Y team about a handful of current projects, attend project related call with same client at 3.30pm
8. Write 'to do list' for tomorrow which contains approximately 30% of those things that I didn't manage to fit in today...
9. Oh – and I need to complete my timesheet!

## What do we look for in a member of the Client Service Team?

Someone who

- Has an **interest** in science – many, but not all, have a science background
- Has a **'can do' attitude** and enjoys a challenge
- **Stays calm** under pressure
- **Enjoys liaising** with clients and the wider team
- Has good **communication skills**
- Is **organised** with the ability to plan and drive a project
- Enjoys working as **part of a team** and knows how to get the best out of it
- Is **comfortable with numbers** (budgeting, reconciliations)
- Is **comfortable presenting**
- Understands the product strategy and can **offer ideas**
- Can **problem solve**
- Is willing to **travel** and work **flexibly when needed**

**The ability to deliver what the client wants, on time and on budget!**



Thank you