

# A Blueprint to Success: Onboarding a Medical Writer

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## ABSTRACT

Title: A Blueprint to Success: Onboarding a Medical Writer

Abstract Keywords: Develop credible and effective relationships, understand deliverables and account for timelines and quality, onboarding/mentoring

Objective: To demonstrate and develop credible and effective relationships and to gain a clear understanding of the quality requirements, training timeline, and process comprehension required to be a successful medical writer.

Method: Twelve industry medical writers with greater than 1 year experience were selected to participate in a series of questions and open feedback regarding their onboarding experiences in the categories of efficiency, productivity, confidence, credibility, compliance, enhanced work quality, and retention.

Results: Case studies will be attached to poster.

Conclusions: The results demonstrated that medical writers whose employers devoted more time to the onboarding and mentoring of employees produced medical writers who were more confident in their roles. A focus on onboarding allowed new medical writers to interact with peers in their organizations and ask questions, request clarifications, or suggest process changes as needed. By enabling the medical writers to be confident and efficient, the writers were able to produce higher quality documents. The more confident the medical writer became, then the stronger the drive was for success.

## BACKGROUND

Onboarding is the process of welcoming new employees into an organization and providing them with the tools, resources, and knowledge to become successful in their new role with the organization. Many organizations may have a formal orientation process usually performed by Human Resources, which familiarizes you with information for your first days of work. The onboarding is a broader, more long-term process that helps new hires acclimate to the social and performance aspects of their jobs quickly, learn the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to function effectively within an organization.

## METHOD

Twelve pharmaceutical industry medical writers with greater than 1 year of industry experience were selected to participate in an online survey where both multiple choice and open-end questions regarding onboarding and mentoring experiences were answered in the categories of efficiency, productivity, confidence, credibility, compliance, enhanced work quality, and retention.

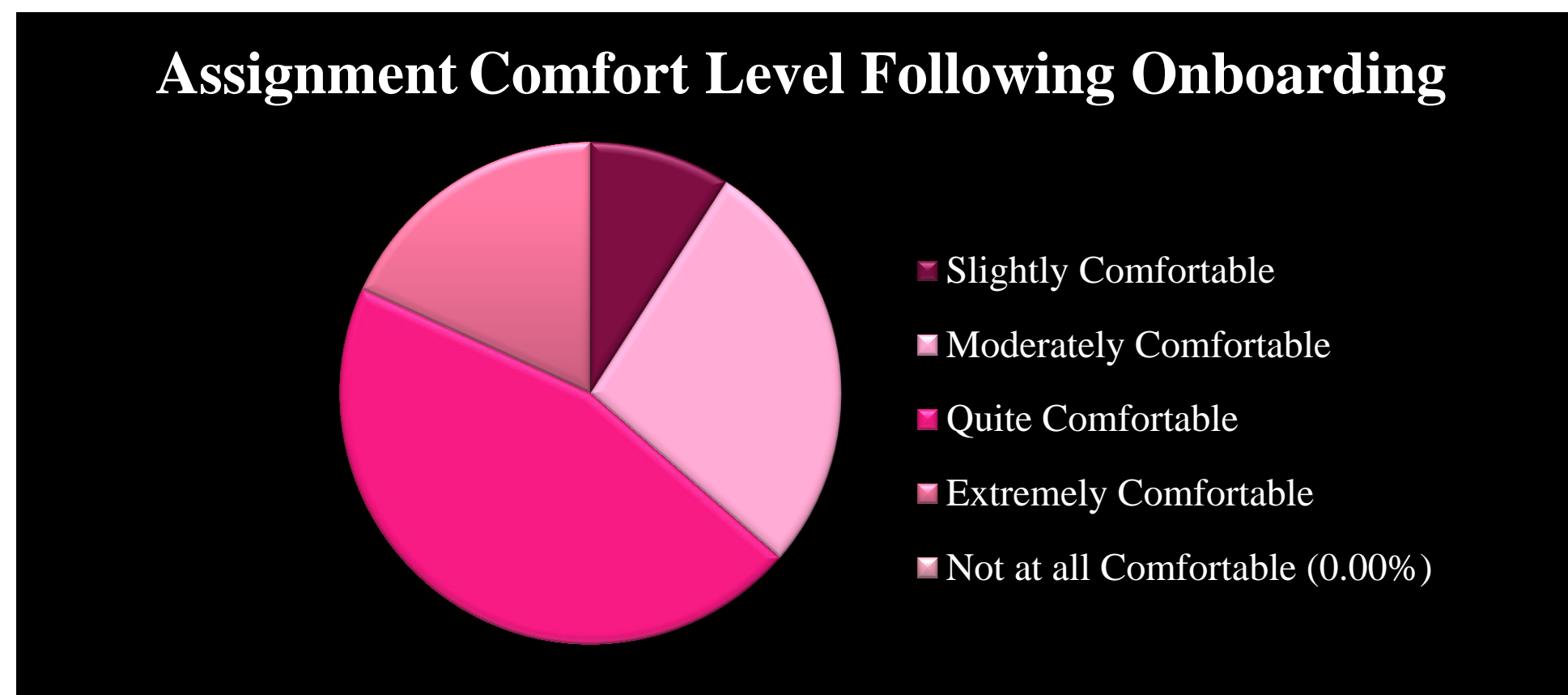
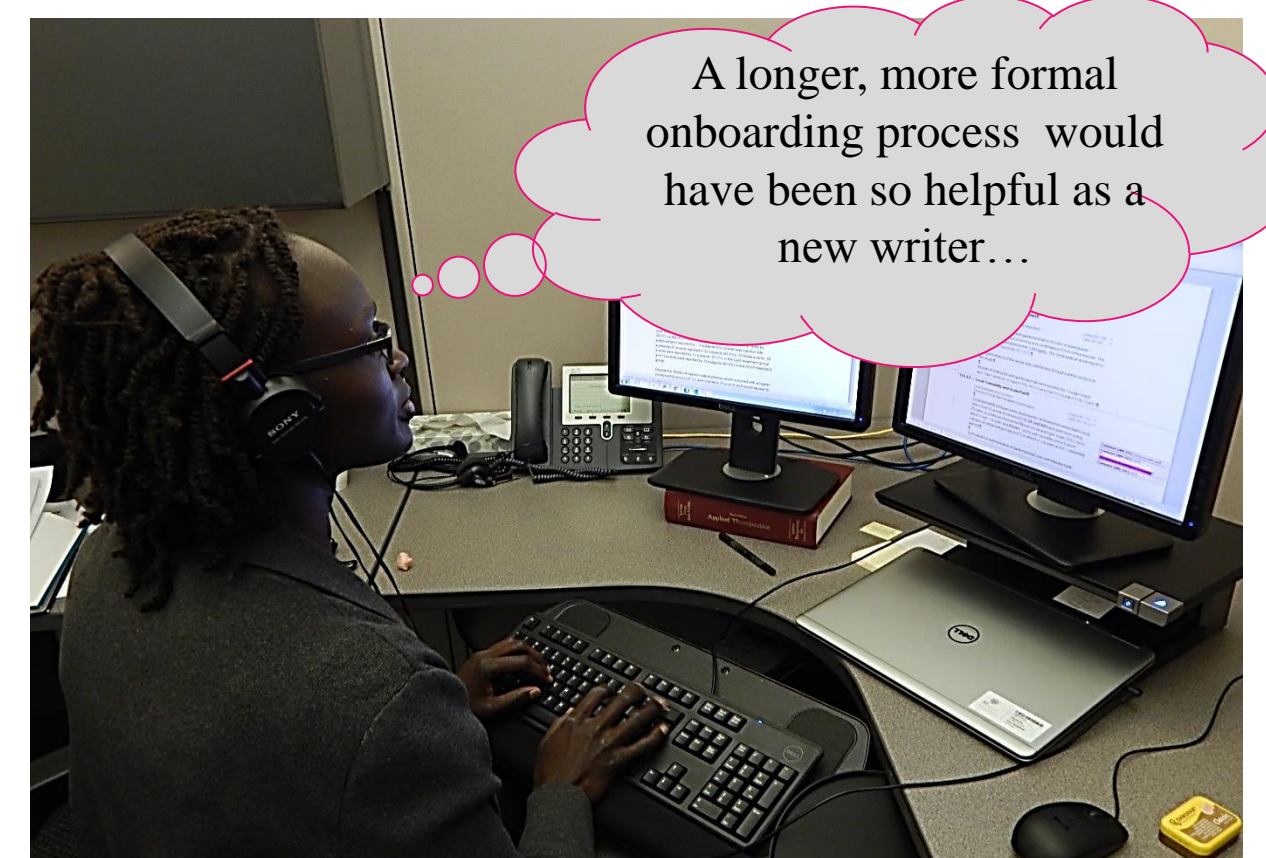
## OBJECTIVE

To demonstrate and develop credible and effective relationships and to gain a clear understanding of the quality requirements, training timeline, and process comprehension required to be a successful medical writer.

## REFERENCES

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Disclosure  
Rona Claire Grunspan, MD: Nothing to disclose;  
April M. Coburn, BA, MLA: Nothing to disclose.

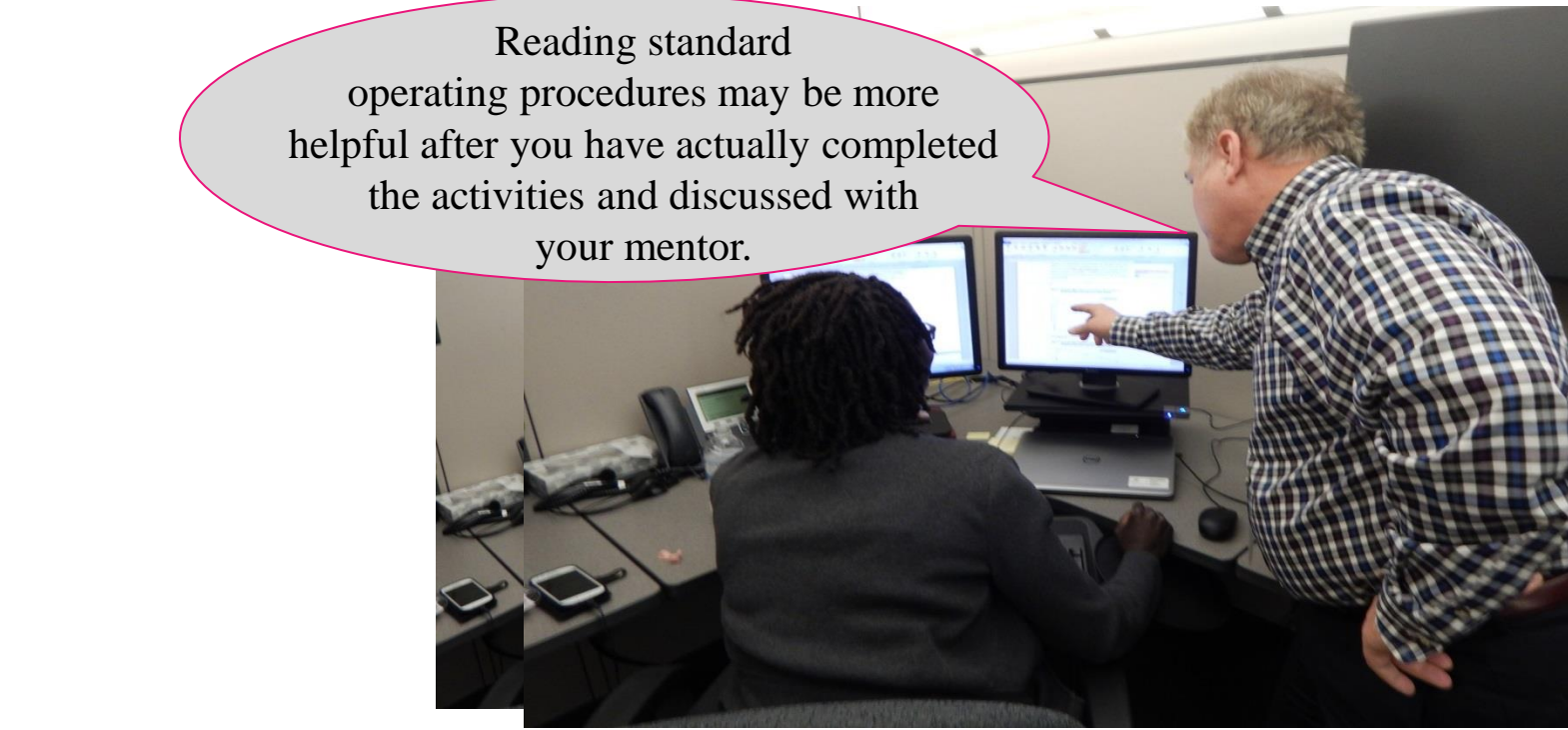
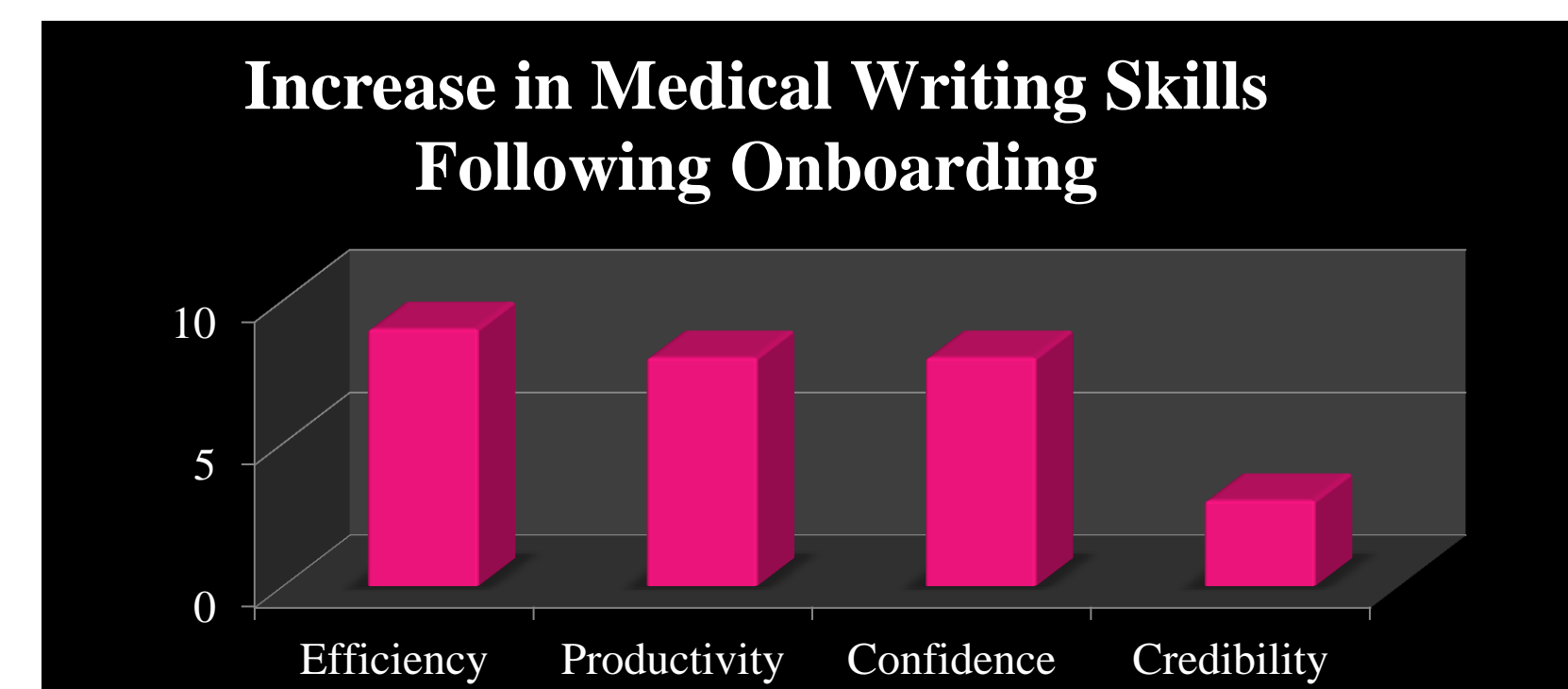


## EVALUATION

Scenario: A medical writer who has more than 5 years of medical writing experience has accepted a position as a Senior Medical Writer in a new organization. The Medical writer has experience working on the assigned documents; however, she is not onboarded to the new organization and finds she has questions about procedures, timelines, and team members during her initial document constructions.

Problem: The medical writer feels that she is not efficient in her job, that the document quality is lacking, and that it is difficult to connect with the proper team members.

Consideration: A formal onboarding process to discuss the acceptance of a medical writer in the organization, a mentor to discuss any questions that may come up while working on current assignments, and having an accessible manager would mitigate the problems.



## RESULTS

A survey was created consisting of 25 questions, of which 23 were multiple choice and 2 that were open-ended responses. The survey was intended for 10 medical writers to complete; however, the survey link was distributed to 15 medical writers and 12 completed the survey.

The 12 medical writers have been in their current positions over a wide range of years: 4 for 1-3 years, 2 for 3-5 years, 2 for 6-10 years, and 4 for over 10 years. A little more than half of the medical writers were involved in a formal onboarding process (58.3%). The majority (66.7%) were assigned a mentor to guide them through the onboarding process. Of the writers who were assigned a mentor, more than half met with their mentor on regular basis (58.3%). Eight (72.73%) medical writers had a mentor review their assignments, and the majority felt that their mentor's feedback was useful. The onboarding process improved the quality of the assignments and increased efficiency, productivity and confidence.

Medical writers were asked, "What was effective during your onboarding process that helped with your role?" Responses were positive from medical writers who had formal onboarding support. They expressed appreciation for the onboarding process: "[it] really provides you with a good idea of how the company works, what the people are like and what is expected of you." The majority prepared themselves with self-reading; however, one medical writer expressed, "[o]nly reading SOPs is very tiresome and sometimes it is easier to understand what is meant in the SOP when you already have actually done the activities described or have discussed how to do something with a peer."

The medical writers were also asked, "What improvements would you have added to your onboarding process?" The majority who did not have a formal onboarding process responded that they wished there had been a formal on boarding process. One medical writer responded, "[w]hat would have been effective had I had somebody, would have been to have them review my work and give feedback" and another medical writer responded, "[a]ctually having one [an onboarding process] would have been helpful."

## RESULTS CONTINUED

Questions	Responses
Are you a medical writer?	Yes = 100% No = 0.00%
How long have you been in your current position?	1-2 years = 33.33% 3-5 years = 16.67% 6-10 years = 16.67% Over 10 years = 33.3%
When you started your current position were you involved in a formal onboarding process?	Yes = 58.33% No = 41.67%
If yes, how long did the onboarding process take?	1-2 weeks = 41.67% 1-2 months = 25.00% > 3 months = 33.33%
Did you have a mentor/coworker/supervisor assigned to provide you formal instructions?	Yes = 66.67% No = 33.33%
How often did the mentor meet with you to discuss objectives for your role as a medical writer?	Regular meeting during the onboarding process = 58.33% Never = 41.67% Once = 0.00%
How clear was the information the mentor provided to you?	Quite clear = 36.36% Extremely clear = 18.18% Slightly clear = 18.18% Not at all clear = 18.18% Moderately clear = 9.09%
Do you feel the mentor/organization provided you the proper training to get started in your role?	Yes = 75.00% No = 25.00%
Once you completed the training, how comfortable were you starting your medical writing assignments?	Quite comfortable = 45.45% Moderately comfortable = 27.27% Extremely comfortable = 18.18% Slightly comfortable = 9.09% Not at all comfortable = 0.00%
What document was your first assignment in your current position?	Clinical Study Report = 50.00% Clinical Study Protocol = 41.67% Investigator brochure = 8.33% Informed Consent = 0.00%
How did you familiarize yourself with the document?	Self-read training materials/tool/SOPs = 58.33% No formal guidance = 25.00% Mentor provided guidance = 8.33% Other = 8.33%
Were you provided with a timeline to complete your assignments?	Yes = 83.33% No = 0.00%
Were timelines discussed for each document type you would be writing?	Had to create my own timeline = 16.67% Yes = 75.00% No = 25.00%
Was the document evaluated by the mentor/coworker?	Yes = 83.33% No = 16.67%
If yes, did the mentor/coworker spend time explaining his/her findings?	Yes = 72.73% No = 9.09%
Were you satisfied with your mentors/coworkers feedback?	Not applicable = 18.18% Extremely satisfied = 36.36% Quite satisfied = 27.27% Moderately satisfied = 27.27% Not at all well = 9.09%
Did you feel you had the proper training material/tools available to complete your assignment?	Yes = 83.33% No = 16.67%
Were you formally introduced to your coworkers when you started in your role?	Yes = 91.67% No = 8.33%
Do you feel you knew who was responsible to provide the information you needed to complete your assignments?	Yes = 100.00% No = 0.00%
Do you feel the onboarding process allowed you to feel comfortable interacting with peers within your organization in the following categories?	Asking questions = 81.82% Request clarification = 81.82% The onboarding process didn't affect my comfort level = 45.45%
Do you feel the onboarding process increased any of the following categories?	Efficiency = 100.00% Productivity = 88.89% Confidence = 88.89% Credibility = 33.33%
Do you feel the onboarding process improved any of the following categories?	Compliance = 12.50% Quality = 75.00% Retention = 12.50% Very well = 50.00% Moderately well = 25.00%
How well do you think the onboarding process helps medical writers to be successful in their organization?	Extremely well = 16.67% Not at all well = 8.33% Slightly well = 0.00%

## CONCLUSIONS

The results demonstrated that medical writers whose employers devoted more time to the onboarding and mentoring of employees produced medical writers who were more confident in their roles. A focus on onboarding allowed new medical writers to interact with peers in their organizations and ask questions, request clarifications, or suggest process changes as needed. By enabling the medical writers to be confident and efficient, the writers were able to produce higher quality documents. The more confident the medical became, then the stronger the drive was for success.