

“Potentially great benefits...”

Bio-economy Career Profile

Position: Chief Scientific Officer

Name: Denis Kay

Company: Neurodyn Inc.

Salary Range: \$80,000 to \$100,000 per year



What I do:

I'm the coordinating point for research & development and communication with our partners. I'm a jack-of-all-trades: I'm trained as a research scientist, but I'm also doing some business development.

A fair bit of my time is spent in administration, and the day-to-day running of the business. Most of my time is spent in data analysis, which is the main focus of the company at this point: to make sure our intellectual-property portfolio is strengthened through research and development.

Travel is part of my job to a limited extent; it's typically to go to trade shows and company meetings. The vast majority of my time is spent in the lab.

I work in a new research institute. It's one of five life science institutes across Canada that the National Research Council of Canada operates, and it is a partnership facility housing six company incubator facilities for biotechnology companies. It's a dynamic mix of corporate, academic, and government-research types – a very fertile environment.

What education and skills do candidates need for this position?

There are a number of paths to working in this position. Lack of career experience is not a barrier to enter into the biotechnology field. For more senior positions, however, experience is obviously an asset.

My experience probably made it easier to jump in with some momentum behind me. I spent 20 years working in academic science after my Ph.D., and the type of science in which I was engaged prepared me very well to move into the position I'm in now – a confluence of career timing and the type of science I'd done in the 20 years preceding.

In terms of skills, you have to have an absolute passion and zeal for discovering new things. You have to have a real sense of optimism despite things that go awry – they certainly will. That persistent effort will eventually pay off.

What are the best parts of your job?

The best thing about the job is that it's science. Even though the finances of an emerging biotechnology company are not unlimited, it's a far richer environment in which to do the science than a pure academic environment. The ability to move more quickly toward an end point is probably the most exciting part of what I'm doing.

The work we do at Neurodyn is of potentially great benefit. We are trying to find some early markers for the neurodegenerative disease process. If we're successful, then there will be real benefits in terms of improved diagnosis and treatment of neurodegenerative disease derived from the work.