

Claire Robinson

At Sterling, our highly experienced team members and their passion for what they do are central to who we are. This month, we spoke with Claire Robinson, Partnership Manager, to learn more about her role and Sterling's unique approach to customer collaboration.

Can you briefly describe your background and current role at Sterling?

I received my PhD from Newcastle University, where I studied organic chemistry. This provided me with a strong background in the synthesis of active pharmaceutical ingredients, and experience with GMP requirements. After earning my PhD, I started my career in the pharmaceutical industry as a Research Scientist, focusing on synthesis, purification, and analysis for APIs, working at the lab scale.

I joined what is now Sterling in 2012 as a Development Chemist, a role in which I also worked on lab scale projects and process scale-up. My primary focus was on ensuring that processes were both safe and efficient. It was also in this role that I began interacting more and more with customers, serving as their eyes and ears in the lab, keeping them up to date on how their project was progressing at all times. This position opened my eyes to the customer service side of API development, and I really enjoyed working with customers more directly.

My desire to work even more closely with customers led me to join the commercial team at Sterling as a Product Manager five years ago, which more recently evolved into the Partnership Manager role. This position has enabled me to take more of a lead in collaborating with customers, ensuring that we maintain a high level of communication throughout the entire product lifecycle. I enjoy this role because it enables me to work with customers on a deeper level than in the lab-based roles I've held previously, while still collaborating with the scientific and engineering teams to ensure the customer's needs are being met.

Can you talk a bit more about the Partnership Manager role and what it entails?

The Partnership Manager role is unique to Sterling—it's not something you'll find at other outsourced pharmaceutical development and manufacturing organisations, and it really ties to our unwavering focus on service. Because we aim to always put our customers first and treat their molecules as our own, it is critical to have a dedicated team member serving as the customer's voice throughout a project. That's where the Partnership Manager comes in.



Fast Facts

ROLE

Partnership Manager

YEARS AT STERLING

10

EDUCATION

Newcastle University

SPECIALISATIONS

Product management, medicinal chemistry, organic chemistry, research and development, cGMP, HSE

I look at the Partnership Manager as a sort of bridge between the customer and Sterling. We are focused on doing what is right for both the customer and for the business, in order to maximise customer success and provide an extra level of outstanding service that customers may not find elsewhere. We ensure that everyone is on the same page internally and externally in every project, and we are transparent about any challenges that come up and what we can do to overcome them. We work with customers on everything from demand planning to supply chain management, manufacturing, and product delivery, taking the time to fully understand their requirements and objectives at every stage. It is evident to me that our customers really appreciate this level of honesty and communication, and they view it as something that truly sets Sterling apart.

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When does a Partnership Manager become involved in a project?

There is no hard and fast rule for when a Partnership Manager begins to engage with a customer; it is highly customised based on the customer, the project, and their specific requirements. We work on a wide variety of projects across a range of different customers, and each has a unique set of technical specifications and objectives. In general, though, the Partnership Manager begins to become involved around the time of commercial validation. This is when we start to transition the project from the business development team to a Partnership Manager, and we make sure to navigate this transition gradually and seamlessly. By using this approach, our business development team can focus on supporting new customers as they are introduced to Sterling, and the Partnership Manager can take the reins once the customer has become more adjusted and prepares to commercialise their product.

We aim to provide this unique level of customer service at all of our facilities to ensure that our customers have the same experience regardless of location, so we continue to expand the Partnership Manager role.

How has your technical background supported your work as a Partnership Manager?

My experience working in the lab has been quite useful in engaging with customers and helping to express their specific requirements to our scientific and engineering teams. Because I've had that hands-on experience, I'm very familiar with challenges that can arise and the steps that can be taken to overcome them. I also appreciate what goes into making processes both safe and efficient while maintaining high levels of quality, and I have gained a strong understanding of the industry at large. This understanding enables me to more clearly communicate project details with our customers, as well as to more effectively express customer requirements and search for solutions alongside our internal teams.

How does Sterling ensure consistency in customer collaboration across its facilities?

Providing the same level of customer collaboration and partnership across all of our sites is an important part of creating One Sterling; a consistent experience for our customers whichever site they visit, living up to our Service, Passion and Science philosophy. We aim to provide this unique level of customer service at all of our facilities to ensure that our customers have the same experience regardless of location, so we continue to expand the Partnership Manager role.

I have been based out of the Dudley, UK facility since I started my career with Sterling, but will soon be moving to our Germantown, Wisconsin site in the US to continue my work as a Partnership Manager there. Because Germantown's project load and capabilities are similar to those at Dudley, this will be a natural transition, and it will support our commitment to providing a highly differentiated approach to customer service at every Sterling facility. I'm excited to engage with new customers and continue fulfilling our promise to serve as true scientific partners to each.



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