

Katie Novosad

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 Katie Novosad, Technical Training Specialist at Sterling, to learn more about her role and Sterling's latest training efforts.

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

I received my Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from Hamline University. While at Hamline, I was very involved in a number of chemistry-related jobs and activities. I worked as a lab teaching assistant, tutored other students and completed two years of independent chemistry research around organometallic reactions, which was ultimately published.

Initially, I was debating between going into industry or academia after completing my undergraduate studies. I spent time working as a Research Technologist at the Medical College of Wisconsin, performing analytical method development to support future clinical trials in immunotherapy. I decided to go into industry, working as a Chemical Research and Development Associate Scientist at Alcam's Germantown, Wisconsin facility. This facility was acquired by Sterling in 2020.

Shortly after the acquisition, we had many new scientists joining the team at Germantown. As they acclimated to their new roles, team members would often come to me with questions. I was always happy to help. This led me to start developing training content on my own, as I always felt like I had an inclination towards training and I had taught more than 200 students in some capacity as an undergraduate. In addition, I was pursuing my Master's Degree in Occupational Safety and Health, where I took a course in Training and Development. My manager helped me to start training team members who were working in other cells and adapting content for different learning styles. I eventually presented these resources to the leadership team, and after I returned from my maternity leave, I was approached to apply for the Technical Training Specialist role. For me, this has been the perfect way to combine my technical background with my love of training and career development, which is really rewarding.

Can you go into more detail about what your day might look like as a Technical Training Specialist?

My role looks quite different each day, which is one of the reasons that I enjoy my role so much. Since we've started investing so heavily in hiring new and necessary resource to facilitate our growth, half of my time is spent working with new hires and training them in a direct, hands-on way. This includes organising new hire orientations. The other half of my time is spent continuing to expand our training and development programme and creating useful content for both new and existing team members. It's important that we not only provide our newest team members with the tools they need to succeed, but also provide our existing employees



Fast Facts

ROLE

Technical Training Specialist – Lab Services

YEARS AT STERLING

4

EDUCATION

Hamline University

SPECIALISATIONS

Training, research and development, analytical chemistry, cGMP, project management

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In addition to my specific job responsibilities, I am involved in a number of other teams at Sterling, including the brand ambassadors team, the activities team and the professional growth and engagement committee and wellness committee. Part of my role in training is to focus on building a strong company culture and maintaining our position as One Sterling across sites. I think my involvement in the other teams plays an important part in that. For example, as a brand ambassador, I am focused on ensuring that any signs, messaging and other assets on our site are on-brand to maintain a high level of unity and consistency. In addition, the activities team and wellness committee create opportunities for our team members to get to know one another better and prioritise well being. Both of these are a really important part of our culture.

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How has training evolved since you began your role as a Technical Training Specialist?

Since I started in my current position, we have been focused on harmonising our approach to training across each Sterling facility. This includes building a strong foundation of knowledge content that can be leveraged across sites. We don't view ourselves as four distinct sites, but rather as one unified organisation. We want to ensure our training and ongoing education resources are reflective of this vision.

To maintain this consistent approach to training, I frequently collaborate with team members at our other facilities to share resources and processes, and identify measures we can take to harmonise our training efforts. As I mentioned, it's really important that we maintain One Sterling even as we continue to expand and that we adhere to our core values in everything we do. It's critical to instil these values in every new team member we onboard, regardless of their site because ultimately, they make us who we are as a PDMO, or partnership development and manufacturing organisation.

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Can you elaborate on how career development and continuing education opportunities fit into your role?

Career development is really important to us at Sterling. That is why we are so focused on offering our team members the resources they need to excel in their current roles as well as opportunities for growth, advancement and even development in new areas of the business. For example, I started as a scientist before moving into my current position, and my manager and other team members were extremely helpful and supportive of this transition. We want to ensure that all of our employees not only have the opportunity to grow in their respective roles, but also the ability to explore other roles if they have an interest in something else that suits their talents and objectives.

It is also extremely valuable that many of our team members outside of predominantly technical roles, such as our training team members, executive team members, Partnership Managers and other key positions, come from scientific backgrounds. This provides us with a unique understanding of our customers' requirements and enables us to more easily work together in a collaborative, integrated way to overcome challenges.

What are some of your goals for training moving forward?

I am always looking to identify and fill gaps in our training and education resources. A primary focus of mine is continuing to build a strong foundation to deliver all of our employees a seamless training and continuing education experience. This includes outlining procedures in a specific and consistent way, ensuring that everyone feels supported through new hire orientation and beyond, and refining our existing resources.

In addition, we are continuing our training harmonisation efforts across sites. This not only helps us to ensure a strong, consistent company culture across all of Sterling for our employees, but also for our customers. It is important for us to deliver our customers the same collaborative, partnership-focused way of working at each of our facilities, and training is an important way to uphold this level of consistency in the customer experience.



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