

Anonymous

Technician

Interviewed by Marie Synakewicz

Before Jane started in her current position in a life sciences research lab over 10 years ago she was working in industry, leading her own research group. They were developing diagnostic test for diseases while running a testing facility at the same time. Due to limited flexibility, and the amount of travelling required for that role, Jane sought other employment which was more easily combined with her growing family.

She took up the appointment as Technician, because the job had been advertised as family-friendly and because she was able to determine the mode of flexibility herself. The new job meant a significant reduction in both pay and standing. Jane chose to work 80% because she could not imagine that one can do research in less than 4 days a week and do it well. Although research is naturally more output focussed than other jobs, working only 80% is hard if the expectations one sets oneself are high. When the children were younger it was easier to adapt a regular schedule since they had to be picked up from the kindergarten or school. Now that her children are in their late teens and are a lot more independent, she often finds herself working a bit longer. Due to the nature of her work, which is based on cell culture studies, she sometimes comes in during weekends or evenings anyway – something she does not mind at all. In her opinion flexibility works two ways: she gets the flexibility from the department to be at home when the children return from school, and the department or the research group gets her flexibility of doing the work at times when it is necessary.

Additionally, she also takes 2 to 3 weeks of unpaid leave to fulfil her assignments for the European Commission. Every year, she goes to Brussels to evaluate applications for the Horizon 2020 program. Jane enjoys the variety of her job which is composed of lab management, supervision of students, and science outreach in addition to her research project and her responsibilities for the European Commission.

Entering a totally different research area was a very challenging undertaking with a steep learning curve. She is of the opinion that one can get enjoyment from science at any level: when investigating a particular question it does not matter which position one has within the group. She likes the demands of her job and appreciates that the learning process, especially in the sciences, will never be completed.