From Bunsen Burner to Wage Earner

Finding Your First Real Job
(For Grad Students and Post-docs)

Doug Kalish, PhD
Times have changed

When I was a grad student, leaving academia was an admission of failure for many.

Today, most of the opportunities are in industry.
But, you need additional skills to go to work

• You’ve been working for yourself
• You’ve been working by yourself
• You haven’t had a boss
• You haven’t had to depend on a team

(mostly)
What you learn as an academic

• Knowledge is an end in itself
• Don’t reveal all that you know
  – In grant applications or publications
• Today’s collaborator can be tomorrow’s competitor
• The less you depend on other people the faster your research will go
To succeed in business, you need to be…

- Focused on products, not interesting science
- Driven by profits
- Aware of the needs/characteristics of the market
- Collaborative internally
- Competitive externally
Welcome

Making the Transition from College or Graduate School to the Real World

Congratulations on leaving or getting ready to leave college, grad school, or your post-doc. You’ve learned a lot, had fun and made friends. Now you’re looking for a job and the reality is sinking in...

COLLEGE HASN’T PREPARED YOU FOR THE REAL WORLD!

Admit it - you’ve had it pretty good. Sleeping until noon for a 1pm class, taking summers off, and you could do a half-assed job on a paper and take the C. That’s going to change.

YOU’VE BEEN WORKING FOR YOURSELF...
YOU’VE BEEN WORKING BY YOURSELF

"But I’ve had internships", you say. Sure, that’s been a taste of life in the business world, but it was for a limited amount of time and the consequences of screwing up weren’t huge. Now it’s for real. You need to learn a whole new set of skills and a new vocabulary. You have to
Today’s talk

• Different business cultures and how to recognize them
• Developing a plan to enter the job market
• The right way to write your resume
• Negotiating your first salary
• Handling rejection
Business cultures

• The business culture and the people you work with have more impact on your job satisfaction than your salary
  – If you are a cooperative, conflict-adverse person at a competitive, confrontational company (or vice versa), you will be miserable

• Most people don’t find out about the culture until it is too late
What defines the culture?

- **Management attitude**: an aggressive, hard-driving, abusive boss communicates to the rest of the organization that this behavior is not just acceptable, but encouraged.
- **Markets served**: banks have different cultures from breweries.
- **Stage of life**: startups will not have the roles, policies and procedures as compared to established companies.
- **Regulations**: the government keeps a close eye on businesses like financial institutions or hospitals so that deviations from the rules can't be tolerated.
- **Finances**: cash-starved startups vs. any of the high-flying social networking companies.
- **Etc.**
Cultural stereotypes

- Power Culture
- Role Culture
- Task Culture
- Person Culture

(From Charles Handy, *Understanding Organizations*, 1976)

+ Academic Culture
Power culture

• Power is concentrated among a few people
• Relationships matter more than titles
• Few rules and not much bureaucracy
• Common in fashion, film, and publishing and early stage startups with charismatic leaders

Do you make relationships easily, like less-structured environments and don’t mind politics?
Role culture

- Power comes from your title or role
- Highly-structured organizations
- Policies and procedures are formalized (ritualized interactions)
- Innovation and independence discouraged

Do you like well-defined jobs with explicit expectations?
Task (or team) culture

• Teams are formed to take advantage of individuals’ expertise
• Skills are highly valued; incompetence is not well tolerated
• Independence, innovation, critical thinking and team skills are essential
• Demanding timeframes and challenges

Do you like to solve problems in unstructured environments with changing objectives?
Person culture

- The expertise of individuals is more valuable than the organization
- Power derives from how much business you generate
- Can be a loose collection of practices with shared and/or dedicated resources

Do you want to be (or work with) a lawyer, accountant or VC in a small practice?
Academic culture

• Power derives from your credentials, your ability to argue and your results, probably in that order
• Your reputation outside the organization may count for more than your reputation inside the organization
• Frequently oriented toward technologies, not products or markets
• Transition to a product-based company may be difficult

Which is more important to you: interesting research or a stable job?
Remember

The best job for you may not be in Research. Law, Management, Grant writing, Policy, Communications, Sales Support, Product Marketing, Research Administration, Education, Public Relations, Project management, Brand management, Recruiting, Training, Fund Raising, Grant administration, Health and Safety Operations, Laboratory design, Compliance, IP management, Journalism, Regulatory Affairs, …
The transition to industry: You need a plan

When should you start looking for a job?

TODAY!
What you need to get a job

• The right skills
• A professional presence
• The right contacts
• A strong recommendation
• Evidence that you can make the cultural transition from academia to industry
Getting the right skills

• You can’t get them if you don’t know what they are:
  – Check out Stanford’s Guided Career Path planning: www.stanford.edu/dept/CDC/gcp
  – Snoop around professional organization websites: www.cacareercafe.com/cool-connections

• Arrange Informational Interviews
  – Site visits
  – LinkedIn and Alumni contacts

• Peruse job postings now (sciencecareers.sciencemag.org, e.g.)

• Classes, training, lab rotations
• PhD degree in immunology, biochemistry, molecular biology or related discipline with 3+ years of postdoctoral experience.
• Strong track record in innovative antibody engineering including technology development and/or generating therapeutic candidates.
• Expertise in one or more molecular evolution technologies is required.
• Experience in applying next generation sequencing technologies
• Expertise in the development of bispecific and multi-specific antibodies
Informational interviews

• Assemble a list of target companies and follow them (at least monthly)
• Arrange informational interviews with target HR and employees, if possible
• www.dougsguides.com/networking for list of questions
• NEVER ASK FOR A JOB IN AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW!
But, science skills are not enough

• Presentations and communications
  – practice, get training: www.toastmasters.org
  – Attend good presentations and take notes

• General business knowledge
  – www.dougsguides.com/businessbasics

• Specific industry knowledge

• Intrapersonal skills
  – “Lab Dynamics” (Cohen & Cohen)
Your professional presence...

- The 3 P’s: publications, posters, presentations
- Start an ‘achievements’ file – paper or electronic
- Set up a parallel online presence – the employable you
  - Use an alias for tweets, checkins, tags that could come back to haunt you
- Build an online reputation
  - Start a webpage or blog (Really?)
- Set up LinkedIn account
- Get business cards
Getting the right contacts

• Interview mentor(s)
  – For science, business, work-life balance, communications, etc.

• One-to-one networking: profs, colleagues, local companies, conferences, trade shows

• Start networking (instructions follow) and don’t forget family and friends – keep track of who you talk to
Networking ideas

• Join professional groups and clubs – join or start a student chapter (bio.org, faseb, ascb, etc.)
• Check out alumni networks and websites
  – Mentoring programs
  – Online job boards: http://alumni.berkeley.edu
  – Contact the alumni assoc in the cities you’d like to locate
• Look for contacts at target companies well before you plan to apply
  – Family, friends, LinkedIn
  – HR
  – Professors and alumni
  – Conference (trade and scientific) presenters, attendees, booths
• Follow industry pundits’ blogs and Twitter feeds
  – Comment responsibly to build a reputation
OK, I hate networking, too

- Be prepared – have a list of questions you want to ask, anticipate their questions and rehearse answers
- Be interested – networking is more about listening than talking
- Be genuine – don’t oversell your experience or skills
- Be courteous – respect other people’s time
- Piggyback – on people who like to network
- Return the favor
- Reach out to the most valuable – at least once every three months
Getting a good recommendation

• A good recommendation is still important outside of academia – at least for your first job
• Most PIs are fairer than you think
• Strong recommendations from the rest of the committee (if grad student) can help
• If you’re having problems with your PI, the time to resolve them is NOW!
Evidence you can make the cultural transition

- Look for on-campus groups, clubs, events & activities (not necessarily career-related) – especially leadership opportunities
- Start reading the business section of paper
- Join professional organizations (e.g. bio.org, acm.org, agu.org)
- Volunteer at professional organizations, foundations – especially meeting organization (good for networking too)
Before your first interview

- Review your online presence: google, bing
- Visit the career center
- Draft first resume(s), cover letter(s) and review with mentors, career center, etc.
- Visit the good ‘how-to-get-a-job’ websites (like sciencecareers.sciencemag.org) and pay attention!
  - Write down and rehearse answers to most likely questions
- Draw on your network for advice
  - Much more likely to get a job through someone you know
Interview prep

• Do your homework
  – Understand the job and the company
  – Know what skills they are looking for (it’s ok to ask ahead of time)
• Customize your resume and cover letter to fit the job (if necessary)
• Be able to explain how your skills fit the requirements of the job
• Have some questions ready
Types of interviews (or questions)

• Behavioral – “Tell me about a time when you had to deliver bad news”
• Informational – “Why do you think you are qualified for this job?”
• Critical thinking – “How many trees are there in North America?”
• Trap - “What’s your biggest fault?”
The most important thing:

• The right skills
• A professional presence
• The right contacts
• A strong recommendation
• Evidence that you can make the cultural transition from academia to industry

(yep, everything)
Should you do a post-doc first?

Yes, if

• you’re not sure you want to leave academia
• you need to develop more specialized skills (scientific or business)
• you need a stronger recommendation
• the job market is soft
Building a resume

A RESUME IS NOT A CV.

A RESUME IS NOT A POSTER SESSION.

IT’S AN ARGUMENT FOR BEING HIRED.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>“Identified p38MAPK as regulator of senescence-like secretory phenotype.” [BETTER]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACHIEVEMENTS</td>
<td>&quot;Identified p38MAPK as regulator of senescence-like secretory phenotype, along with small molecule inhibitors as a model for modulating apoptosis due to DNA damage.&quot; [BEST]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>“Investigated the link between DNA damage and senescence triggers.&quot; [BORING!]</td>
</tr>
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Negotiating your first salary

• Have a competing offer (if you can)
• Do your homework
• Understand the whole offer
• Ask questions
• Be honest
• Accept alternatives
If you don’t get the job…

• It’s not necessarily about you
  – There was an internal candidate
  – They hired the friend of an employee
  – There are a lot of experienced and skilled people out there
  – Someone was better networked
  – The culture wasn’t a fit
If you don’t get the job...

- It might be about you
  - You didn’t have the right skills
  - You had the right skills, but you weren’t able to prove it to them
  - Something about your personality or appearance put them off
- It wasn’t the right place for you

You’re entitled to some explanation. Use it to do a better job next time.
The good news

There are great jobs out there and someone is getting them – it might as well be you!
Getting ready to leave college for a real job? Feeling overwhelmed? I can help with that.

It’s simple. Just hit the ‘Like’ button (follow the arrow) then sign up to receive ‘dougsguides to the Working World’ as an ebook. You’ll find everything you need to survive and thrive in your first job... It’s that easy.