Successful Career Coaching Strategies: A Practical Approach for Postdoc Offices

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Initial Assessment Questions

Questions to postdoc:
• Can you tell me what you’re looking for in the next position?
• Can you give me an example of an achievement?
• How do you introduce yourself to others?

Assessment:
• Can they answer with sufficient detail?
• Can you repeat their answers to someone else?
Here’s What They Need

• Success Stories
• Style Definition
• Value Inventory
• Career Story
• Career Target
• Networking Plan
Success Stories
Success Story

• *Title:* One word or phrase for easy recall

• *Problem:* Describe a problem/challenge YOU faced

• *Actions:* Use verbs to tell what YOU did

• *Outcome:* Explain measurable results of YOUR actions

• TIP: Practice communicating your achievement to someone you know. Ask that person to reflect back what was heard. Was your story understood
Style Definition

- Leadership
- Vision
- Communication
- Interpersonal
- Research
- Analysis
- Planning
- Implementation
Style Definition

• **Leadership**
  – I am a visionary leader who likes to think big. I am also pragmatic and, having come up with the dream, can take manageable steps in the right direction. I lead by teaching. I like to ask leading questions to help people arrive at a conclusion on their own. I am supportive of my team, generous with encouragement and with credit for ideas and contributions. I respond positively and constructively to problems.

• **Vision**
  – I am verbal and see things as words – at first as words on post-it notes that I can move around as new multi-dimensional categories occur to me. As my thinking progresses, the organization of words in my mind shifts to more complex models such as flow charts where shapes, colors and connections among words help to add clarity to their relationships. Very often to aid my thinking and to share it with others I make my thoughts manifest on actual post-it notes we can all work with and as diagrams on whiteboards or flipcharts.

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Style Definition

• **Communication**
  
  – I am a communication catalyst. I facilitate conversations by helping to bridge the communication gap between people with different backgrounds, styles, cultures, languages and thought patterns. I think it is very important to understand not just what but why and I always ask.

• **Interpersonal**
  
  – I am a team-oriented consensus-builder. I am tactful and empathetic and I use that empathy to challenge others and bring out their best. I am accepting of people and ideas and reach solutions by integrating the best components from all contributions. I have excellent persuasive skills and can successfully sell ideas across, up and down organizations.
Value Inventory
Value Inventory

- Skills/Expertise
- Titles and Industries
- Education
- Community Service
- Awards
- Memberships
- Publications
- Languages
- Passion
Career Story
A Career Story

• When did you first know you wanted to be...

TIP: Your career story can be used to carry out effective informational interviews in your target industries.

Practice communicating your career story to someone you know. Was your story understood?
Career Target

Company

Division/Dept.

Industry

Passion

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Networking Plan
Networks

• Associations: professional associations

• Education: alumni networks

• Social Networks: LinkedIn
Tracking the Networking Plan

- Contact
- How
- Action
- Result
- Follow Up

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The Warm Referral Letter

Dear Mr./Ms/Dr.

In a recent conversation with [the connection] regarding my career development, she/he told me you are [say something nice]. She/He suggested I contact you to schedule a meeting as she felt you would be able to furnish me with valuable advice and information.

Please understand I do not expect you to have a position or be aware of any openings at this time

Share your *Mini Biography* based on your value inventory.

I would like to meet with you to discuss: [Meeting topic]

[Take Control] I will call you the week of ____ to arrange a time to meet. I know your time is valuable and I promise to be brief.

Many Thanks,
Dear John,

In a recent conversation with Sarah Duncan regarding my career development, she told me that you had a great success in industrial career after your postdoc at Harvard. She suggested I contact you to schedule a meeting as she felt you would be able to furnish me with valuable advice and information.

Please understand I do not expect you to have a position or be aware of any openings at this time.

Presently, I am a research fellow at HMS’s New England Primate Research Center, Laboratory of Translation Phenomics under the advisory of Dr. Eric. I am working on human/primate genetics and neurodegenerative diseases including Huntington’s disease (HD). I used high throughput sequencing and bioinformatics analysis software to develop better primate disease models. I also found new target for Huntington’s disease and running proof of concept studies.

I have Diploma in software development, MS in Biomedical Sciences, and PhD in Pharmacology & Toxicology. I have strong practical experience in neuroscience, molecular biology, genetics, pharmaceuticals and computation expertise for combinatorial approach to find innovative biomarkers and therapy for neuropsychiatric diseases.

I would like to discuss how I can transitions from academia to industry, what in my background would industry be interested in.

I will call you the week of 14th to arrange a time to meet. I know your time is valuable and I promise to be brief.

Many Thanks,
Informational Interview Preparation

• Purpose:
  – Leave a good impression
  – Get info to help make a decision
  – To gather referrals

• Goals:

• Preparation: Review LinkedIn profile

• Outcomes:

• Follow-up:
The Informational Interview

• Ice Breaker
  – Career Story

• Conversation
  – Gather info to help make a decision

• The Close
  – Thank you
  – Ask for referrals
Thank You Notes

• Always handwritten – choose a card that reflects the person that will receive the note – Cards are often saved.

• Always timely.

• “Thank you for referring me to Dr. X. I will follow up with her and keep you apprised.”
HMS Career Development Approach: A Case Study
Build an Office They Will Use

Developing Programs
- Create quality programs that add value to the postdoc experience.

Branding
- Broadcast a consistent message across diverse mediums.

Outreach
- Develop relationships in the community, locally and nationally.

Community Building
- Build partnerships and collaborate within the institution.
Reach Out to the Community

**Postdocs**
- Offer programming specific to the needs of postdocs
- Develop reliable training curriculum
- Enhance career track-specific programming

**Faculty**
- Faculty Advisory Committee advise & guide programming and policy development
- Participate and present in postdoc programming

**Departments**
- Regular communication with Staff & Administrators
- Info & Policy clearinghouse; Provide tools & resources
- Respond to departmental needs

**Institution**
- Visa & Appointment process; Postdoc salary & term
- Postdoc hiring practices; onboarding & exit procedure
- Community-wide initiatives impacting postdocs
Postdoc Programming
Our Approach

Career Planning

Professional Development

IDP
IDP
IDP
IDP

Career Exploration
Job Search Skills

Transition to Industry
Academic Job Track

Postdoc Essentials
Communicating Science
Responsible Conduct of Research
Grantsmanship

Research Progress

0-2 years
2-4 years
4-6+ years

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Academic Job Search

The Academic Job Search Series: Summer/Fall 2014

Academic Teaching Careers
Judah Axe, PhD, BCBA-D
Vanja Klepac-Ceraj, PhD
Celeste Peterson, PhD

Wednesday, June 11 | 4:00-6:00pm
Cannon Room, Building C

Preparing the Academic Job Search Package
Sandeep Robert Datta, MD, PhD
Chengua Gu, PhD
Judith Glaven, PhD
Stephen Liberles, PhD
Rachel Wilson, PhD

Monday, August 18 | 2:00-4:00pm
Armenise Amphitheater

Postdoc to Academic PI
Jenna Galloway, PhD
Ayal Ben-Zvi, PhD
Matt Traxler, PhD
Zeba Wunderlich, PhD

Thursday, July 31 | 1:00-2:30pm
Cannon Room, Building C

Acing the Academic Interview
Angela DePace, PhD
Sandeep Robert Datta, MD, PhD
Judith Glaven, PhD
Stephen Liberles, PhD
Rachel Wilson, PhD

Thursday, October 9 | 2:00-4:00pm
Armenise Amphitheater

For more information on events hosted in Longwood visit the OPF website:
postdoc.hms.harvard.edu

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Industry Job Search

Special Event Series for Postdocs

Jan-Feb 2014

How To Find A Job In Tough Times

Featuring Sarah Cardozo Duncan, Career Strategist

Part One: Marketing Yourself
Thursday, January 23, 2014 | 1:30-3:00pm
Ballard Room, Countway Library

Part Two: Informational Interviewing
Monday, February 3, 2014 | 1:30-3:00pm
Ballard Room, Countway Library

Part Three: Your Communication Style
Thursday, February 20, 2014 | 1:30-3:00pm
Ballard Room, Countway Library

To register visit the OPF website: postdoc.hms.harvard.edu

Special Event Series for Postdocs

Fall 2014

Demystifying The Job Search & Career Transitions

Developing an Effective Job Search Strategy
Lauren Celano, Founder & CEO, Propel Careers
2:00-3:30pm | TMEC 227, 260 Longwood Avenue

Crafting Your CV & Resume
Jim Gould, PhD, Director, HMS/HSDM Office for Postdoctoral Fellows
2:00-3:30pm | TMEC 227, 260 Longwood Avenue

Acing the Industry Interview
Lauren Celano, Founder & CEO, Propel Careers
2:00-3:30pm | TMEC 227, 260 Longwood Avenue

How to Establish an Efficient Network & Stand Out
Lauren Celano, Founder & CEO, Propel Careers
2:00-3:30pm | TMEC 227, 260 Longwood Avenue

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Career Exploration

Early Careers in Consulting: Exploring Your Options

Speakers Include:

Thomas Yang, PhD
Senior Manager, Monitor Deloitte
Deloitte Consulting LLP

Jon Weber, PhD, MBA
Consultant, Putnam Associates
(Recently at Simon-Kucher & Partners)

Xun Wang, PhD
Senior Analyst, ICON
(Formerly PriceSpective)

Suelin Chen, PhD
Consultant, IMS Consulting Group

Learn more about:
- What consulting is
- Potential career paths
- Diverse consulting firms

Thursday, July 24, 2014
3:30 - 5:00 PM
Cannon Room, Building C

To register visit the OPF website: postdoc.hms.harvard.edu

-Career Discussion Hour-
Exploring Careers Outside Academia

-Featured Speaker-
Nicolas Preitner, PhD
Senior Scientist, New Venture Labs
Moderna Therapeutics

Join us to learn about a career in biotech and pharmaceutical research...

Monday, March 30, 2015
3:00 - 4:00 PM
Goldenson 122

To register visit the OPF website: postdoc.hms.harvard.edu

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Postdoc Career Coaching
This is what I try to do...
Assessing the Situation: Intake Questionnaire

1. Institution and Department (HMS, HSDM, BWH, MGH, BCH, DFCI, BIDMC, HSPH, FAS, or other Harvard/HMS affiliate)? *

2. Please provide a brief description of your situation including objectives of the meeting, barriers to success, and potential timeline. *

3. Please provide a brief description of your specific needs. *

4. How did you find out about the HMS/HSDM Office for Postdoctoral Fellows and its CV & Career services? *

MGH

I only have a part-time temporary teaching position now. My status at MGH is a visiting postdoc associate which enables me to wrap up certain things.

General advice on strategy and priorities about the type of jobs I am applying to. Specific help on the wording needed to enable me network and connect with people over email or in person.

I have previously come to the HMS postdoc career office.
Many Postdocs are at a Crisis Point

• Near postdoc end date
• Unsure of marketable skills
• Inactive network
• Little or no mentor engagement
• Unknown career target
• Incomplete achievements
• Analysis paralysis
• Unpolished career story
• Exhausted, jaded, or burnt out
• Unrealistic expectations
Career Coaching: Expectations

Reason for Appointment

Endpoints

- CV and/or Resume: 78%
- Job search: 33%
- Cover Letter: 33%
- Next steps: 21%

Starting Points

- Career options: 19%
- Guidance on a specific task: 16%
- Networking strategies: 12%
- Information: 10%
- Interview prep: 8%
- Difficult conversation: 8%
- Teaching/research statement: 1%
Career Coaching: Expectations

Appointment Outcomes

- Got what they came for

- Left a ‘bit’ more prepared

- Better job application: 73%
- Increased self-awareness: 30%
- Strategies for career options: 22%
- Resources for information: 19%
- Informational interview prep: 19%
- Specific career goals: 16%
- Preparedness for interviews: 15%
- A starting point: 14%
- Tools for communication: 12%
- Networking techniques: 12%
- Awareness of IDP: 8%
- Strategies for negotiations: 8%
Career Coaching: Service

Approval Rating

- Honesty: 4.60
- Communication style: 4.60
- Helpfulness: 4.56
- Competence and Knowledge: 4.56
- Ease of registration: 4.53
- Thoroughness: 4.50
- Satisfaction with services: 4.44

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Career Coaching: Service Awareness

- OPF Email: 35%
- OPF Website: 31%
- OPF Event: 20%
- From a colleague: 17%
- From OPF staff: 11%
- Clickbook Website: 6%
We are doing good work...

• “best advises and feedback that I received”
• “...He helped me extensively for every step of my new job search, CV prep and preparation for interviews. He was an excellent communicator, very efficient and effective in providing continuous feedback to me at every step of the procedures...”
• “very helpful feedback, also great advice in terms of career counseling- Jim is very honest, open and easy to talk to. overall it was a great experience!”
...but we could be better

• “The advice I received was exactly what I asked for/needed, but it was necessary due to an awful relationship with my PI. I wish someone had directed me to the Office of General Counsel before I had given up my NIH fellowship, as I really could have used some authoritative guidance.”

• “time [in appointment] is limited”

• “We'll see on "satisfaction" when I get the job :)...”
Moving from Career Crisis to Career Coaching

- Engage postdocs early and often
- Market to faculty and staff
- Share honest information
- Provide actionable items
- Commit to multiple sessions
- Implement coaching tool consistently
- Create accountability
Help Them Get What They Need

- Success Stories
- Style Definition
- Value Inventory
- Career Story
- Career Target
- Networking Plan

Thank You

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