

# Elements of a Successful Job Search

Postdoc Professional Development



NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY

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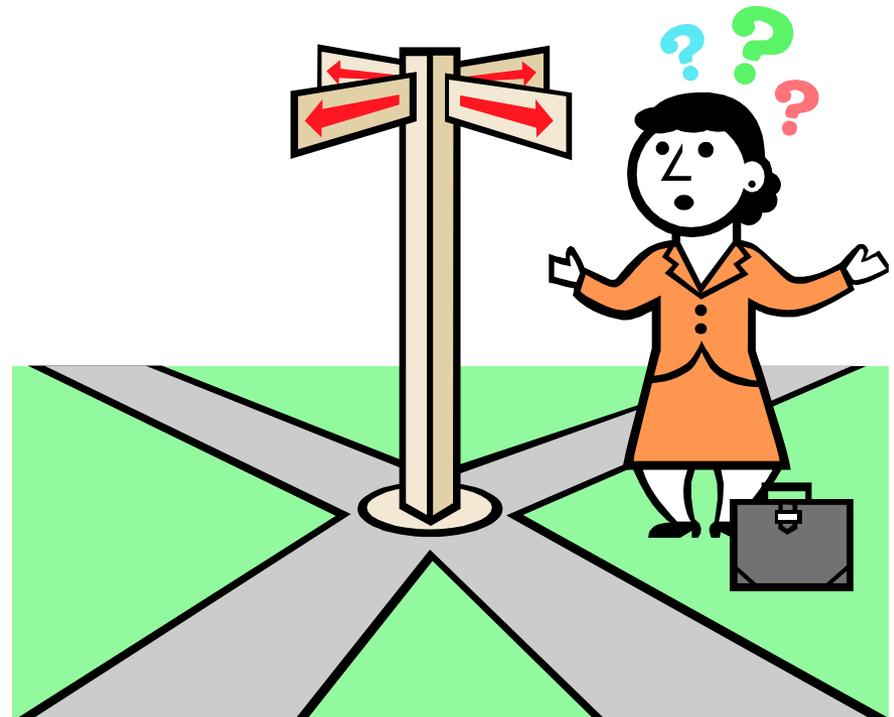
# Presentation Objectives

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- Review important steps for the job search **outside of academia**
    - Self-Assessment
    - Researching and Exploring Careers
    - Required Documents
    - When, Where and How to Find Positions
  - Identify career resources for postdocs at Northwestern
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# What to Expect

- An unstructured process
- No clear formula or timeline for success
- Approaches to the job search may vary by industry
- An emphasis on “soft skills” over specialized knowledge (for some positions)
- Time consuming process
- Rejection



# Skills Employers Value from PhDs

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- Valued prior work experience
- More maturity
- More knowledge
- Better developed skill set
- Reduced training time
- Creative thinking
- Self-motivation
- Ability to analyze and solve problems
- Comfort with writing and presenting
- Ability to gather and synthesize information/data
- Flexibility and comfort with ambiguity
- Quantitative and data analysis skills

# Misconceptions About Graduate Student Job Seekers

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- Overqualified
- Only interested in academia
- Failed initial academic job search
- Overly theoretical
- College student mentality
- Unaware of deadlines
- Too Casual
- Antisocial



# Steps for a Successful Job Search

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# Step 1: Self-Assessment

## *What is Self-Assessment?*

Gathering information about yourself in order to make informed career decisions.

Self-assessment provides insight into your

- Skills
- Interests
- Values
- Personality
- Needs
- Motivations



# Self-Assessment for Postdocs

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- Identify relationship between your specialized training, areas of academic expertise, and job opportunities
  - Understand aspects of your background that are marketable to employers in many settings
  - Confirm that your career interests are on the right track - OR - potentially save you from pursuing an unfulfilling career
  - Reduce indecision and eliminate roadblocks in job searching

# Questions to Ask Yourself

Transitioning out of Academia	Skills and Expertise	Reframing Mindset
<p>Why have you decided to pursue a career outside of academia at this point in your career?</p>	<p>What do you like/don't you like about your postdoc experience?</p>	<p>I have no work history. Do my accomplishments translate to people outside of academia?</p>
<p>Is academia still your preferred career plan?</p>	<p>What skills and expertise have you developed through graduate research and your postdoc experience?</p>	<p>Am I a failure if I do not pursue an academic career?</p>
<p>Have you always planned to keep your career options open?</p>	<p>What skills and expertise have you developed through related experiences?</p>	<p>I have invested a lot of time in my academic career. Did I waste time and energy?</p>
<p>Am I ready for a career change?</p>		<p>Will my career choice disappoint others?</p>

# What are Transferable Skills?

Transferable skills are the skills you have acquired during any activity in your life that are ***transferable and applicable*** to what you want to do in a particular position.

“One of your key transferable skills from research is the ability to multitask and juggle projects. Be able to explain those transferable skills. Think about your project management skills and your multiple responsibilities.”

# But I Don't Have Any Skills!

## Research & Information Management

- Gather relevant information using library and internet resources
- Understand and synthesize large quantities of information
- Design and analyze surveys

## Project Management & Organization

- Manage a project from beginning to end
- Manage several projects at once
- Identify goals and/or tasks to be accomplished
- Develop realistic timeline for completion of project
- Prioritize tasks

## Interpersonal & Leadership Skills

- Facilitate group discussions or conduct meetings
- Motivate others to complete projects (group or individual)
- Respond appropriately to positive or negative feedback
- Collaborate on projects
- Teach skills or concepts to others
- Able to navigate complex bureaucratic environments

## Analysis & Problem-Solving

- Define a problem and identify possible causes
- Comprehend a large amount of information and identify the elements relevant to the problem at hand
- Form and defend independent conclusions
- Design an experiment, plan, or model that defines a problem, tests potential resolutions and/or implements a solution

## Written & Oral Communication

- Prepare concise and logically-written materials
- Organize and communicate ideas effectively in oral presentations to small and large groups
- Use logical argument to persuade others
- Explain complex or difficult concepts in basic terms and language
- Write effective grant proposals

## Self-Management & Work Habits

- Work effectively under pressure and to meet deadlines (good time management)
- Comprehend new material and subject matter quickly (fast learner)
- Work effectively with limited supervision
- Able to thrive in a competitive environment
- Attentive to detail

# Step 2: Research!

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## ***Research the Industry***

- Study industry trends
- Learn the major players
- Identify typical roles for someone with your background
- Identify particular employers of interest

## ***Research Specific Employers***

- Visit employer websites
- Review their mission, values, culture, size, location and job postings
- Identify contacts with current or previous work experience with the employer

# Employer Research Resources

The logo for Career Insider, featuring the word "career" in black and "insider" in white on a green background.

POWERED BY 

The Vault logo, which includes a stylized orange and yellow arc above the word "vault" in a bold, lowercase font.

Vault is a comprehensive resource for job search and career management information, including insider information on salaries, hiring, and company culture.



Wet Feet offers profiles on over 1000 companies , 30 major industries and "day in the life" profiles of dozens of career professionals



A database of company information that can be used to find and discover companies by location, name, size, industry and keyword .



A business research company that maintains a database of over 65 million companies worldwide.



# Informational Interviewing

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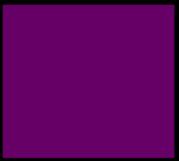
## *What is an Informational Interview?*



A type of networking interview that allows you to employer and/or industry research through a one-on-one conversation with a professional in the field.



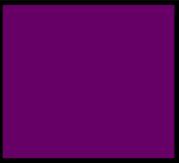
## **Informational Interviews allow you to**

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- Gather information that cannot be found online
  - Learn about the career journey about your contact
  - Obtain advice for making yourself marketable for the field
  - Leave a positive impression for future career opportunities/leads



# Learn the Language of the Field

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- Read job descriptions carefully and highlight the skills needed for the position
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- Connect as many of the skills you highlighted to related skills and experiences from your own background.
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- Compare the above two lists and try to identify attributes that are transferable from one role to the other.
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- The more clearly and accurately you can describe this connection, the easier it will be for an employer understand.
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# Sample Job Description

Seeking a **highly motivated** and **team-oriented** candidate for the position of ***Principal Scientist*** in the Quantitative Pharmacology Group of PKDM Department.

He/she will be responsible for program-level **strategic and resource planning, communication, scientific/technical deliverables, issue resolution, and functional representation** for internal governance reviews, **face-to-face interactions** with global regulatory authorities, and external scientific communities. The individual will **effectively lead** PKDM Development Project Team, and **interface** with internal business stakeholders. Responsible for the PK, PK/PD, and Modeling & Simulation **strategy** in the Early and Global Development Teams, **prepare regulatory documents** as a PK/PD expert, and **represent** PKDM Department in the global regulatory interactions. **Development of junior members and interaction with the line-management** will also be key responsibilities.

# Sample Job Description (cont.)

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- Experience in PK/PD modeling and population-based analyses/simulations (e.g. hands-on experience for software such as **NONMEM, S-PLUS, Clinical Trial Simulator**, etc) and PK analysis (e.g. proficiency in **WinNONLIN**)
- **Experience in authoring regulatory documentations** (IND, IMPD, CTX, RTQ, CTD, etc), knowledge in global regulatory requirement and guidance, and interaction with global health authorities
- **Leadership quality for effective team building with strong decision making and problem solving skills**
- Excellent **interpersonal, technical, and communication skills** that **enable effective management and resolution of complex issues** involving **collaborations** within a cross-functional **team setting**
- **Project management skills** for timeline tracking and resource planning

# Step 3: Polish Your Documents

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## *Job Search Documents*

- Know the required documents for the industry/employer
  - Typically requested: Resume/CV and Cover Letter
- Tailor documents to the job description
- Use the jargon/keywords of the field
- Highlight your experience from multiple areas (transferable skills)

# CV vs. Resume

## Curriculum Vitae

- Typically longer than 2 pages
- Detailed overview of your academic and scholarly accomplishments
- Used when applying to academic teaching and research positions
- Used when applying to grants, fellowships, and some administrative positions
- Also used when applying to positions abroad

## Resume

- 1-2 pages in length: Concise
- Summary of relevant skills, education and experience
- Marketing tool to obtain interviews
- Communicate your potential value
- Content is tailored to the audience
- Used when applying for positions in industry, business and non-profit fields

# The Importance of Cover Letters

- Tells the employer the type of position you're seeking and exactly how you are qualified for that position.
- Highlights the aspects of your experience that are most useful to the potential employer
- Calls attention to the skills, talents, and experience the employer is looking for
- Think of the employer as your client: what does the client want/need?
- Emphasizes tangible evidence of your skills and abilities

“A good cover letter is concise, has clear direction, and explains why the skills outlined on the resume are a good fit for the position” ~*Nonprofit recruiter*

# Step 4: Market Yourself

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***Everyone you know should know you are looking for a job!***

## Develop Your Marketing Plan

1. Your Professional Objective (Self-Assessment)
  - What do you want to do?
2. Your Target Market (Research)
  - Where do you want to work?
  - Who do you need to connect with?
3. Your Core Message
  - What will you say to others about yourself?

# Your Core Message

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## *Develop your “Elevator Pitch”:*

- A concise and memorable introductory statement that quickly conveys important and interesting information about you: Who you are, what you do, and how you do it.

Hello **(PERSON YOU ARE TALKING WITH)**. My name is **(INSERT NAME)**. I am a postdoc at Northwestern University studying **(insert area of specialization)**. I will be finishing up in **(insert time frame)** and looking for a **(insert type of position)** in an **(insert type of employer)** in the **(insert geographical area)**. **(add detail about what makes you unique, i.e.: strengths and accomplishments)**.

# Network! Network! Network!

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## *What is Networking?*

Cultivating productive relationships to exchange information or services that have the potential to advance your career

## **Fears and Misconceptions about Networking**

- “I will start networking in a few years when I am on the job market.”
- “I’m so nervous about networking that I will embarrass myself.”
- “I’m just a postdoc. I don’t have anything to offer my contact in return.”
- “I don’t know anyone”



# Who's In Your Network?

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- Undergraduate Institution Alumni
- Graduate Institution Alumni
- High School Alumni
- Academic Program Alumni
- Research Group Alumni
- PI/Advisor
- Other Faculty
- Research Collaborators
- Current Employers
- Previous Employers



- Family
- Friends
- Career Fairs
- Recruiters
- Professional Organizations
- Student Organizations
- Fraternity/Sorority Members
- Other organizational members
- Athletic teammates
- Friends of friends
- Mentors
- ***Anyone missing?***



# Making the Connection

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- LinkedIn
    - Alumni Groups
    - Industry/topical groups
    - Departmental groups
  - Alumni Databases
    - Connect with alumni from your undergraduate and graduate institutions
  - Be Visible
    - Presentations at Conferences & Meetings
    - Profile on Departmental or Lab Websites
    - Volunteer for Committees and Leadership Roles
    - Attend local networking events (Biologue, AWIS, etc.)

# Step 5: When & Where to Look

## *Where do PhDs find Jobs?*

- Non-profits
- Publishing & Media
- Teaching
  - Secondary Education
  - Corporate Training
  - Community Groups
- University Administration
- Government
- Research and Development
- Hospitals/Community Health Agencies

***...Everywhere!***

# Sources of Information and Postings

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- Stay tuned into multiple career information sources:
  - University Career Services
  - School-specific Career Services Office
  - Career office of your undergraduate and graduate institution
  - Academic Department/Advisor
  - Student Organizations
- Don't forget about your personal network!
  - Friends and Family
  - Former employers and professors
  - Mentors
  - Alumni (from undergraduate AND graduate institutions)
  - Informational Interviewing contacts
  - Professional Organization contacts

# Additional Sources for Job Search Advice and Postings

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## Online Resources

- Employer Websites
- Professional Society Websites
- PhDs.org
- ScienceCareers.com
- jobs.newscientist.com
- Chronicle.com
- Usajobs.gov
- Biospace.com
- Biocareers.com
- VersatilePhd.com
- Naturejobs.com
- Idealist.com
- Indeed.com

## Recommended Reading

- "So What Are You Going to Do with That?": Finding Careers Outside Academia by Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius
- "Leaving the Ivory Tower" by Barbara E. Lovitts

# Keep in Mind...

- Many positions for PhDs are not published
- 50-75% of positions are found through networking
- PhDs are often recruited for “just in time” hiring
- Many employers do not consider career fairs as an effective approach to recruiting PhDs
- Many employers cultivate relationships with potential candidates through academic departments, alumni connections, and professional organizations when recruiting PhDs

# More to Keep in Mind...

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## ***The average job search takes 6-8 months!***

- Begin the job search process at least 1 year before your anticipated hire date.
- Many of the steps for a successful job search are ongoing tasks that should be performed throughout your time at Northwestern
  - Self-Assessment (*ongoing*)
  - Develop and perfect resume, cover letter, CV (*ongoing*)
  - Networking (*ongoing*)
  - Research industries and companies (*ongoing*)
  - Review job postings (*ongoing*)
  - Applying to open positions (*determined the date your postdoc appointment will be ending*)

# Career Resources for Postdocs at NU

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<http://www.northwestern.edu/careers/students/graduate-students/resources-for-post-docs.html>



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- CareerCat is an online internship and job database offered by UCS.
  - Also includes part-time and on-campus job opportunities during the academic year.
  - Employers in CareerCat have ***specifically selected Northwestern*** as a school to receive their employment opportunities.
  - Registering for CareerCat to receive UCS Weekly email notifications with information about upcoming events, employer visits and workshops.



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# Questions?

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## University Career Services

620 Lincoln Street

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## Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

633 Clark Street

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/post-docs/>

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