

The non-academic job search for graduate students & postdocs

Anne Krook

@akrook www.annekrook.com

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This workshop's goal

At the end of this session, you will know how to search for non-academic work and how to prepare to do so while you are in graduate school or doing a postdoc.

Today

- We have two and a half hours, which includes time for questions and a break in the middle
- Please open the slide list and have access to the Excel template exercise (“Instructions” tab) and the Word résumé
- My colleagues will make sure I see questions in the Q&A and chat panels
- You may take notes via phone photos and tweet or post about the session
- A PDF of the slides will be sent for you and a recording of the session will be posted

Agenda

1. Graduate training and the non-academic job market
2. Preparing yourself
3. Non-academic job-search mechanics
4. Do this next
5. Resources
6. Reminders

1: Graduate training and the non-academic job market

My career “path” so far

How I made the big changes

Lessons from my transitions

A non-academic employer’s view of a PhD

Good traits of (most) job candidates with PhDs

Bad traits of (some) job candidates with PhDs

What my grad students and fellow former academics do

Adapting to the non-academic job search

My career “path” so far

- Native of Ithaca, NY, Cornell faculty brat: high school => college => grad school
- University of Michigan asst. prof.
- Bartender
- Amazon.com: many roles over 13 years
- Mindbloom: VP operations at a start-up
- Synapse: VP operations at a medium-sized product design engineering firm
- Past Chair, Board of Directors; Emeritus Board of Directors, Lambda Legal (nonprofit) [current]
- Consultant, author [current]

How I made the big changes

- Faculty member => bartender (forced change)
 - Denied tenure: needed a job! @\$%!
 - Moved from Ann Arbor to Seattle
 - Got a bartender's license
- Bartender => Amazon.com (sought change)
 - Chatted with fellow former member of grad student softball team, an early adopter of the internet, who told me about Amazon (1996)
 - Interviewed with them and discussed my *skills* (not much about my previous *jobs*)
 - Got new skills on the job and used them to take on new roles
- Member, Board of Directors, Lambda Legal (unsought change)
 - Involved as a donor
 - Hated their web properties and complained about them
 - Consulted with them about improving the web properties
 - Invited to join Board of Directors

Lessons from my transitions

- Most jobs do not require a specific *credential*; all jobs require *skills*
- Non-academic work is interesting, challenging, varied, and developing
 - You don't know what you could be doing
 - You may spend part of your career in fields that don't exist now
- You can engage with it in many ways
 - You can learn many things on the job
 - Your interests (not just your training) can lead to a job
 - If you complain about it, ask yourself if you can help fix it
- You can get an academic job and still need to change jobs

A non-academic employer's view of graduate training

- To an employer in a related field
 - it indicates your commitment to advanced training
 - it may be an advantage
- To an employer in an unrelated field
 - it is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage
 - it is a choice you made about how to spend your time that you will need to explain, including why you did not finish (if you don't) or why you did (if you do)

Good traits of (most) job candidates with graduate training

- We look at persistent, difficult problems in new ways
- We believe others have things to teach us
- We value collegiality
- We realize that explaining some things is hard and learning some things is hard

Bad traits of (some) job candidates with graduate training

- Some have a narrow view of intelligence
 - *Sells other types of intelligence and other people short*
- Some believe intellectually rewarding work must be related to academic work and workplaces
 - *Sells other jobs and workplaces short*
- Some think taking other kinds of work means “not using” their degrees, and resent it
 - *Sells yourself short*

What my former grad students and fellow former academics do

- Astronaut (US Navy/NASA), then Blue Origin
- Attorney
- Clergy
- Consultant, healthcare industry
- Director, regional art institute
- Editor, scholarly journal
- Faculty members
 - Faculty member and director of Study Abroad
- Principal, experimental charter high school
- Producer, online games

Adapting to the non-academic job search

- Believe that interesting work awaits you
- Describe your skills, not primarily your credentials
- Broaden the range of people you seek out for help
- Treat everyone you meet along the way as a valued, respected colleague
- Make your message to an employer this: ***My skills can help solve your challenges***

2: Preparing yourself

- Broaden your self-description
- Find people to help your job search
- Prepare yourself mentally

Broaden your self-description (1)

- Your self-description may now look like this:
 - I am a grad student / postdoc in [field and subject] with an expertise in [topic]
 - I am an experienced researcher, experienced with [archival / field methods, research techniques]
 - I am a scholar, having presented [this] and published [this]
 - I am in training to become a faculty member / PI
- *Frequent internalization: “this is who I am”*

Broaden your self-description (2)

- You should also describe yourself like this (**academic equivalent**):
 - I complete large projects with minimal supervision (**papers, research projects, dissertation**)
 - I have worked in large enterprises (**your institution**) and medium-sized organizations within the enterprise (**your department, your lab**)
 - I have participated in / led small teams within the enterprise (**reading groups, TA groups**)
 - I use research and analytical skills to identify problems (**proposals**)
 - I manage contentious discussions toward productive conclusions (**any seminar, any level**)
 - I persuade reluctant adopters to accept and deploy standards (**introductory courses, any subjects**)
- *Better internalization: “this is what I do”*
- *Abstract your skills from where you currently deploy them*

Vehicles for that self-description: CV vs. résumé

- A CV
 - is written in academic shorthand
 - is evaluated by skilled readers who understand CVs
 - Is comprehensive
- A résumé
 - is written for people who may not know how to read CVs: they do need to know what you can do to help solve their problems
 - may initially be evaluated by entry-level employees or software
 - Is selective
- To write a résumé
 - gather information from your *entire* work history
 - describe your jobs, achievements, and skills

Gather information for your résumé

- Graduate school rewards a narrow focus; nonacademic job searches reward a broad one
- **Remember** where you've lived and what you did
- **Define, sort,** and **count** the skills you gained
- This process will
 - remind you what you know (more than you think)
 - create a rudimentary skills database out of which to build your résumé

Template exercise

*[template exercise to help you **remember** information and use it to **define, sort, and count** your skills]*

Create a résumé from your data

- Your message to a non-academic employer: ***My skills can help solve your challenges***
- Your résumé's message to a non-academic employer: ***My skills can help solve your challenges; here's proof***
- Highlight critical supporting information
 - Describe what you were responsible for and key skills you used
 - Describe outcomes, with measured results where possible

Review Anne's résumé

Your résumé wardrobe

- You need the following versions of your résumé:
 - An unformatted doc of your résumé's material, for copying and pasting to submit online
 - A version for each general type of job you are applying for (ex.: industry bench scientist, science educator, public-sector research). Most people have two or three
 - A one-page version of each résumé
 - Your generic résumé appears on LinkedIn

Always submit the length of résumé asked for

Résumé and cover letter

- Your résumé forms the basis of your cover letter
- Your cover letter uses the data of your résumé as proof that your skills can help solve the employer's challenges as set out in the job description
- The rest of the letter details why you are interested in that particular job
- Both résumé and cover letter must independently support your application: not everyone reads both equally carefully; some only read one

Broadening the pool

- Only a few people can help you get an academic job; many people can help you get a non-academic job
- You must assemble a pool of people who can help you reach out to others
- *Personal contacts help you find out what a job advertisement really means*
- *Personal contacts help résumés not get lost in a pile*
- *Personal contacts do not “get you a job”*

LinkedIn is the current tool

- LinkedIn provides a database of companies, jobs, and people
 - Companies and jobs: It helps you research organizations and their job listings
 - People: It helps you ask for introductions to people you don't know through people you do know
- Use LinkedIn to
 - make your résumé available online
 - create a group of people you know through whom you will reach out to others for information

Create your pool of contacts

- Invite people you know to connect on LinkedIn
 - People in your own address book / contacts
 - People LinkedIn recommends, if you know them
 - Members of groups to which you belong (alumni orgs, professional societies, clubs)
 - People with whom you have interacted well
- You should not add people you don't know or whom you do not respect
 - Ask: “would I introduce them to someone I respect?”
“would I do them a favor?”

Contacts are a core professional asset

- Keep your contacts updated
- Bring them up to date: name, private and / or work email, mobile phone number
- LinkedIn contact suffices for purely professional connections
- Set a calendar reminder to invite new LinkedIn connections every week: consistent small steps over time make a big difference
- ***Back them up (local, cloud, external device)***

Prepare yourself mentally

- A note about gender
- A note about “starting over”
- You can start with an interim job
- For-profit job notes
- Non-profit job notes
- Public-sector job notes
- Time and the nonacademic job search
- Handling the slog

A note about gender

- A male applicant
 - Applies if a job asks for six qualifications and he has three
 - Views job requirements as negotiable and desired ones as optional
 - Routinely negotiates salary and benefits
- A female applicant
 - Often does not apply if a job asks for six qualifications and she has five
 - Views job requirements as non-negotiable and desired ones as required
 - Routinely does not negotiate salary and benefits

A note about “starting over”

- You may find yourself applying for entry-level jobs
 - People with PhDs will often be promoted faster than others out of entry-level jobs, as they are more mature and experienced than many other entry-level employees
- Many non-entry-level jobs will open to you if you describe your skills and experience well

You can start with an interim job

- Find almost any job
 - Having a job helps you present well in interviews
 - Employers prefer to hire the employed
 - It's easy to explain why you are working at an interim job
- You can start with temp or contract work
 - You learn about a company, an industry, and a boss
 - You could do contract work successfully long-term
 - Short-term contracts give you flexibility around family responsibilities or a partner's seasonal work
 - Many contract firms have offices throughout the US, facilitating relocation

For-profit job notes

Common misconception:

- leaving academic-based research for for-profit work means you'll have less intelligent colleagues or less intellectually demanding work

Non-profit job notes

Common misconceptions:

- It's easier to get a non-profit job than a for-profit job without relevant experience and skills
- People in non-profits are better motivated than those in for-profit or public-sector jobs
- Lower material rewards will be compensated for by more rewarding work

Public-sector job notes

- Differences from for-profit and non-profit jobs:
 - Hiring requirements may be more rigid
 - Compensation and benefits may not be negotiable
 - Your salary may be publicly available
 - Your comments about your job on social media may be regulated
- Consider running for office one day – not enough people with graduate training (especially scientific training) do: shadow a campaign, or volunteer

Time and the non-academic job search

- Academic jobs
 - come at the end of the long process of getting a PhD and postdoc(s)
 - most preparation for your job search comes from your academic work
- Non-academic jobs
 - can be entirely separate from the academic training process, or related to it to greater or lesser degrees
 - the job searches require the same steps as academic job searches (learning what the jobs are, their lingo, and how to apply for them), but those steps are not ordinarily part of your degree program
 - at the end of a PhD program you may believe you have not done anything to lead up to getting such a job (spoiler: not true)
 - these searches can be prepared for constantly, in small steps, so you are ready if you ever want or need to be

Handling the slog

- You are here because you have succeeded on the academic path
- Your job search will have many disappointments
 - Great-sounding jobs that fill just before you apply
 - Few acknowledgments of applications
 - Fewer phone screens than acknowledged applications
 - Fewer interviews than phone screens
 - Fewer job offers than interviews
- Rejection is normal, not a sign that you are failing (see: Devoney Looser, “Me and my shadow CV”)

10-minute break

3: Non-academic job-search mechanics

- Job postings
- Hiring managers
- Job-search logistics

Job postings

- How to start searching online
- Where (else) to find them
- Who writes them
- Who they are for
- Learn to read them
- How to use your LinkedIn contacts
- There are no perfect candidates

How to start searching online

- Geographically
 - Within a 1-hour commute of [place]; by public transportation in [place]
- By field or job type
 - Training-manual writing; event management at public parks
- By network
 - My LinkedIn connections; my career center(s)
- Randomly, everywhere (tempting; unwise)
- Set of keywords describing what you do best, within a geography (most common)

Where (else) to find them

- On websites of companies, non-profits, and public-sector services you admire or want to improve: **search for the organization rather than the job**
- In publications, on- and off-line, of places you would like to live: **search for the place rather than the job**
- *International students*: find companies from your home country that do business in the US, and US companies that do so in your home country. Your embassy or consulate can help.

Who writes them

- The hiring manager and / or
- Someone in Human Resources and / or
- The last person to hold the job, especially if that person succeeded at the job

*The person you will be directly working for has not always written the job description. **A personal contact at the organization is your best source of information about what the job description really means***

Who they are for

- Directly:
 - External and internal candidates
- Indirectly:
 - The hiring manager's boss and / or Finance, to prove the position is needed

*Applicants are not the only audience for the job description. **A personal contact at the organization is your best source of information about what the job description really means***

Learn to read them

- Read a lot of them (100+) to [learn their jargon](#) before you apply to anything
- Learn [academic nearest equivalents](#) for required and requested skills
- Ask friends in those types of work to help you understand the job descriptions
- Ask organizations that have posted interesting job descriptions for informational interviews about those jobs

How to use your LinkedIn contacts

- Find a job description you want to know more about
- Look in your LinkedIn contacts for someone with that kind of job, who worked there, or with a connection to someone who does
- Ask “Hello, Anne, I see [you/someone you know] worked at [job type/organization]. Would you be willing to [answer some questions about that job type/introduce me to that person]?” Of course this approach also works for anyone not on LinkedIn.

There are no perfect candidates

- There are no perfect applicants: applicants have different skills in different degrees. All hires are compromises
 - If you like the job description but do not have every required and desired skill, find out which are key
 - If you like the job description and can make a credible case that you have done that kind of work well, apply for the job
 - Women: if you like the job description and can make a case that you have the skills for the job, apply for it

Hiring managers

- What they need and want
- How they behave

What they need and want

- They need someone to solve problems for them:
 - Handle the volume of work
 - Take on a new type of work
- They want every skill they need, but will frequently take a subset, if
 - some of the skills are in high demand
 - the job is in a hard location to recruit for
 - the job is critical and has been open a while
 - the candidate is smart and willing to learn
- They want the new person to start as soon as feasible, or as soon as budgeted

How they behave

- They have an idea of the person and skills they want but can be persuaded otherwise. ***You can make the case that you are the right person with the right skills***
- They trust someone who has worked at their company to refer job candidates more than anyone else. ***Finding someone you have a connection with where you are applying is valuable. LinkedIn helps with this.***

Job-search logistics

- Time frame
- Budget
- **Before you apply to any non-academic job**
- The basic process
- First contact
- What interviewers usually do
- Phone screens and interviews
- In-person interviews
- After the interview
- References
- For your future as a hiring manager

Time frame

- Know roughly when you will end your academic work
- Plan on a search lasting at least six months of part-time effort; a year is not uncommon
 - Assuming you are starting a non-academic search from scratch, including defining the job(s) you are looking for, at least four months of that should be research into jobs
- Preparation for a job search can be done in small, regular increments
 - Developing a pool of contacts should start immediately and continue for your entire professional career: try to add two a week
 - Reading job descriptions should start immediately: read three a week

Budget

- You will need
 - to support yourself for some months after your academic stipend, if any, or postdoc runs out
 - interview travel money, upfront expenses that will likely be reimbursed whether you get the job or not (you may ask if you are not told)
 - a good internet plan and a good cellphone data plan
 - clothes appropriate to the interview (job, locale, profession) and a cleaning budget, if they need dry cleaning
- You will not need
 - professional head shots, unless you are in an audience-facing media business (it's fine to have one on e.g. LinkedIn)
 - business cards (it's fine to have them)
 - LinkedIn Pro

Before you apply to any non-academic job

- Draft a résumé (not a CV)
 - Get a friend from a non-academic workplace to critique it
 - Revise it and get it reviewed again
 - Update LinkedIn with your reviewed and revised résumé
- Read lots of job descriptions
- Review your online presence and be able to explain what's there
 - check blogs, FB, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok
 - Google your name and read 3 pages of results
- Revise or create a short writing sample (500-750 words) for intelligent, interested, non-specialist readers
 - Get a non-academic friend to read it
 - Revise it
- Identify and clean your interview clothing and shoes
- If you can arrange one, schedule a mock interview; dress for it, too
- *International students: know and have documents for your visa status*

The basic process

- Find a job listing
- *Research the job type and the organization*
- *Find a contact there, if you can, and discuss the job*
- Apply, with a résumé and a letter
- Have a phone or video interview (sometimes)
- Have an in-person interview
- Submit references and any supporting material for verification (usually)
- Receive offer, possibly negotiate its terms: start date, salary, benefits

First contact

- After you research the job type, the organization, and the individual job,
 - Write a job letter tailored to the job (1:1)
 - Submit a résumé suited to the job
 - Your LinkedIn profile must support your letter and résumé
- Most people will read either the letter or the résumé carefully, but not both equally carefully

What interviewers usually do

- Look at your LinkedIn profile and see if you know anyone in common
- Google your name
- Read your job letter and résumé, but not equally carefully; some people only read one
- Ask around to find out if anyone knows you personally
- Review your writing, work, or code sample if any

Phone screens and interviews

- All:
 - Prepare at least three questions for your screener or interviewer: one each about the job, the company, and the location
- Phone and video:
 - You may be asked to use a videoconference platform that you do not use regularly: download and test it first
 - Free your phone area from visual and aural distractions
- *Do not stop your job search if you get a phone screen or an interview. Do not stop your job search until you are at your desk your new job.*

In-person interviews

- Ask the scheduler about the interview standard of dress. If you forget, don't call the day before and ask
- If you are given the names of your interviewers, look them up on LinkedIn and Google
- Bring pad and pen even if you usually take notes on a device
- Bring hard copy of your references' names and current contact information. Wait to be asked to hand it over
- If you are not told when you can expect to hear back, you may ask at your last interview

After the interview

- Send a thank-you note to the hiring manager, professional, not fulsome, in tone. Email is fine; a handwritten note (plain stationery, dark ink) is better, if your handwriting is legible
- If you have had good interactions with the people who interviewed you, invite them to connect on LinkedIn, whether the hiring decision is positive or not
- If you do not hear back within the stated time, you may email to ask. After two emails, you may call

References

- Usually given by phone or submitted online, rather than written ahead of time once and sent from a file
- Requested response time is shorter than for a reference for an academic job
- Typically you will need 3-5
 - The referees may be current research colleagues
 - One need not be your thesis supervisor or PI
 - Ideally one can speak to your work in non-academic settings
 - Give them the job description and your current résumé
- References are less critical for non-academic jobs than for academic-based ones

For your future as a hiring manager

- One day you will be hiring people
 - Remember being new to the job search
 - Remember being rejected. Craft a courteous, professional rejection, and send it promptly
- Everyone you interact with may be or refer your next great employee
 - Treat everyone courteously and professionally
 - Treat everyone as someone who can contribute to your organization

Do this next

- Do the template exercise; update it once a year
 - The initial exercise takes about eight hours over three sessions
 - Yearly updates take about half an hour in one session
- Join LinkedIn
 - Add the people you know well and respect right away
 - After the template exercise, add the people it brings to mind
 - Create a calendar reminder to add two people a week
 - Don't add your résumé until you have someone review it
- Start reading non-academic job descriptions to learn their jargon
- Create a non-academic email address if you don't have one, unless applying from your academic department is an advantage
- Clean up your contacts and keep them current
- **Set a regular backup schedule** for your contacts and your files

Resources

- www.payscale.com, @payscale, and www.glassdoor.com and [.ca](http://www.glassdoor.com) Helpful advice on researching and negotiating compensation
- @USAJOBS, @governmentjobs – US-wide job listings in the public sector. Very helpful for learning the range and language of public-sector jobs
- www.annekrook.com – free (and ad-free) posts on aspects of the non-academic job search (see next slide)
- Gawande, *The Checklist Manifesto* (project completion)
- Litman, *Run For Something* (running for office: US-specific but good advice for others)
- Wizenberg, *A Homemade Life* (making your own career)

Resources

- Get your next good job: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=1385
- Going on the job market & worried about being “overqualified”? what that means: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=944
- What I sometimes miss when I interview people with a PhD for non-ac jobs: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=877
- On PhDing, jobsearching outside one’s home country: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=833
- Describing your skills in a non-ac job letter: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=729
- They’re not transferable skills; they’re just skills: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=1443
- Don’t use these phrases in your non-ac job letter: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=812
- What (not) to use as a writing sample for a non-ac job: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=954
- Be sure you can answer these questions at a non-ac interview: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=549
- What (not) to ask at your non-ac interview: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=786
- Home for a holiday? How to answer questions about your dissertation and your jobsearch: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=905
- 4 posts on the emotional aftermath of leaving academics: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=751

Reminders

- Careers are long and seldom follow predictable paths
- The non-academic working world offers interesting, challenging, meaningful work
- Things not invented now will create new jobs

Appendices

- Résumé reminders
- Flying solo (6)

Résumé reminders

- A sans serif font is easier to read online than a serif one
- Keep a plain-text, entirely unformatted version of your résumé for easy cutting and pasting to online forms
- Especially women should omit full snail-mail address
- Note your work eligibility if it's an advantage (“eligible to work in US and EU”)
- If you send in a hardcopy résumé make the font no smaller than 11; 12 is better
- You don't need to say “references available on request”
- Names of your references do not belong on your résumé
- You do not need to label volunteer work “volunteer”
- How to address common topics on your nonac résumé:
http://annekrook.com/?page_id=600

Flying solo

- Working for yourself
- Constraints
- Solo, part-time
- Solo-ish: franchises
- Solo is often not solo
- Post: http://annekrook.com/?page_id=1133

Working for yourself

- You can build your own business:
 - define a skill that people will pay for
 - find out what the market currently pays for that and set your own rate
 - find customers
 - deliver the service
 - bill them
 - manage the business (taxes, permits, etc.)

Constraints

- Businesses take time and, usually, at least some money to build
- Payment takes longer to come in than the business takes to build
- You must manage things that are managed for you when you work for others (taxes, payroll, regulatory compliance, etc.)
- New-business development becomes your first or second job, always

Solo as side-hustle

- You can work for yourself while holding another job: you will learn
 - whether a skill can become a viable business
 - whether you actually like doing something for a living, or as a side-hustle
 - whether you want to manage your own business
 - whether you want to rely on its income

Solo-ish: franchises

- Franchises include ones suited to many grad students and postdocs: tutoring, writing, school-skill development, test prep
- You can learn how to run a business while getting paid
- Part-time work is often available
- If you do well for a franchise, you may be offered management training, a cheap and quick way to get it
- Some franchises will help good managers open new franchises, with financial support and ownership training
- Some franchises are nationwide, facilitating relocation

Solo is often not solo

- Flying solo freaks out some people
 - Ask yourself: are you one of the freaked-out?
 - Ask: Is your partner one of the freaked-out?
 - **Communication and flexibility are essential, especially about money and risk tolerance**
 - Be prepared to fail and start over
 - Be prepared to explain what you are doing, over and over (to potential customers; to family and friends; to nosy strangers on airplanes)

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