

# First step towards a career in Biotech

EVERY YEAR MANY ASPIRING GRADUATES COME OUT OF COLLEGES SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK IN THE BIOTECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY. HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE TIPS TO THOSE 'FRESHERS' HOW TO MAKE THEIR WAY IN THE INDUSTRY

**W**hat you are in life is mostly defined by what you do for your living. It is important to make the right choices so that you do what you like and you also like what you do. How do we balance each other? "Especially when I am a fresher or still a final year student about to complete my graduation or post-graduation?" This is a common dilemma for every student; more specifically for those who are in the biotechnology, biological sciences or related field.

We have our parents, friends and those-who-have-made-it-in-the-software examples exerting a lot of peer pressure directly or indirectly to get into a job which most people do. The difficulty for most of the students if not all is to be aware of the choices available and then choosing the right path. There is no one-answer for this, every individual wants to be unique and create a mark. The beauty of Biotechnology is "it is possible for each one of you".

The first step is to find out about the choices available, to get there you

have to move out of your comfort zone, start asking your Professors, people within your network; of emails, those yahogroups which you thought was not for you, and seek for an internship whether it is an academic institute or a commercial organization.

Be clear about the objectives of the internship, it may not always be for doing something very scientific or even remotely close to what you may have always wanted to do, like cloning, structure based drug design or stem cells, but the objective should be to be among professionals who have made a career out of studying the same as you did many years ago.

Many biotech students and parents come to me asking for advise on career planning and I always say that if you think through, you will always have somebody who knows somebody working in this industry, be it academic or commercial organization. Shortlist them first, the next step is to present yourself to them and offer your services. I am yet to come across a scientist who would deny helping an aspiring intern to get the first oppor-

tunity to work, even if it means recommending her to a colleague who may have a possible short term position in the lab.

Now let's be fair, you also need to put yourself in their shoes and think 'why should I be allowed to work which involves allocating resources to a fresher who may or may not deliver the required results?' I am excluding the very bright, crème de la crème of your class who will already have a place somewhere.

The best pitch for yourself should be that you are dedicated, passionate, well updated about the field in which the target organization operates in and can save abundant time of those experts who have to do the mundane job of experimental preparations, searching for the Intellectual Property Rights, preparation of the gene/protein/small molecule database, background research on a specific topic. All this for very little or no cost and for a period of 3-6 months!

Remember, all the people who are potential guides for your internship are extremely busy and have scarce or very expensive resource doing the job that you can do for almost free of cost. This experience would give you several advantages including the exposure to the industry, build contacts, a lot of advice on your career planning, hot areas which require specific talent and most of all the right connections to climb the next step in your career ladder, be it higher education or the skills required for your 'real' job.

Go get it tiger! ■

*The author is a HR manager in one of the leading biotechnology companies involved in high value research services in the genomics and bioinformatics industry.*



**SHILPA RAMDURG**  
HR Manager  
Polyclone Bioservices