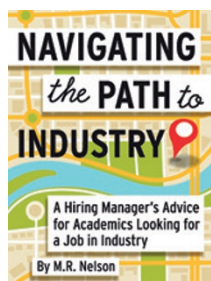


The inside track



NAVIGATING THE PATH TO INDUSTRY: A HIRING MANAGER'S ADVICE FOR ACADEMICS LOOKING FOR A JOB IN INDUSTRY

by M. R. Nelson

ANNORLUNDA BOOKS; 2014. 74PP. \$5.99

Last year I made the move away from university life and into the chemical industry. Finding that next job was a hard task to say the least and not an enjoyable one at all. I spent hours altering my CV, searching for new synonyms for 'enthusiastic' and trawling through job adverts. If only somebody had given me a magic formula for success, my life would have been so much easier ...

But of course there is no magic formula. There is only advice, and with over ten years of experience as a hiring manager in the biotechnology industry, Melanie Nelson is well positioned to supply that need. In *Navigating the Path to Industry* she has produced a concise guide, a mere 72 pages, aimed squarely at academics searching for a new position in industry. This transition is often said to be a one way street and rarely discussed in universities. How then are aspiring industrialists supposed to prepare for the change in lifestyle? That void is precisely what this book hopes to fill.

Nelson begins by admitting to the reader on the first page that her book "cannot guarantee you a job." Nothing can do that. But what she has produced is a step-by-step guide to finding that next job and being as fully prepared as possible for the journey. The book is split into two main sections with part one covering all the preparation needed before you even start to write an application. Part two then takes you through the application process, right up to that killer interview, but of course beginning with the humble CV.

No two CVs are the same and I always found that my friends had completely different layouts to what I was using. This difference was partially because they were working in a different area but also because

there is no single best way to do it. There are however, certain sections that are essential in an academic CV and others for an industry CV, and I was surprised by how much detail Nelson went into when discussing these points. That said, the straightforward and knowledgeable advice about the differences between academic and industry CVs was very welcome. This document is the first impression a new company gets of you, so you want to get it right.

The title of this section was, 'Write a great resume'. Oh, so that's where I was going wrong! All this time I was deliberately writing terrible resumes. The headings and section titles leave a lot to be desired and whilst they are a little unimaginative, they do get straight to the point. The writing throughout the book continues in this style; concise, easy to read and, without being patronizing, extremely informative.

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Networking is mentioned a lot. This book cannot stress enough how important networking is. There are two sections solely dedicated to it. LinkedIn is also frequently mentioned. Building a network and managing it is certainly made easier with LinkedIn and Nelson really takes time in this section to explain the ins and outs, from setting up a profile to contributing to discussions. Maybe not needed for most, but essential for newbies. Personally I also found LinkedIn useful for looking up the managers and people that you are applying to work with. This way you can learn a little about them before applying or before an interview. Nelson is practical and honest with her advice and even goes as far as to say that the help you can get from networking is worth more than the advice in her book. However, people do get jobs in all sorts of ways: through friends, job fairs and even from adverts in the newspaper (so I'm told). For me, her emphasis on networking is a little over the top. In the end I got my

industry job simply by applying through the company website, with no prior contact in the company. I must have finally written a great resume after all.

Applying for jobs is itself a full time job, which takes a lot of time and effort. It is hard work. Nelson does occasionally admit this fact, although I wouldn't have minded the occasional, 'you can do it', along the way! Then again, when talking to an expert, you're not necessarily looking for a kind word, what you want is to know exactly what to do and the best way to go about it and that's the approach that this book takes.

The book really does cover everything about applying for jobs, even what to wear in an interview and how to deal with inappropriate questions. Also, many of the ideas that Nelson puts forward are very applicable to other walks of life, not just for entering the chemical industry. Adequate prior preparation, networking (again) and a real consideration of what job you want to do, amongst other things, are useful pieces of advice if moving outside of science completely and you don't need a specific book to give you that information. A quick internet search will bring up numerous generic helpful websites with basic advice. The industry specific points, such as your CV structure, are where Nelson's experience pays off.

Overall, this book is unlikely to change your life. A lot of the advice here is common knowledge and I found myself often thinking, "yes, yes of course, give me something new". There is nothing really revolutionary within its pages or anything that couldn't be learnt from talking to a few experienced colleagues. So would this book have made my journey from academia into industry any easier? No, I don't think so. I think that the book could find its key audience in those who are on their own and a little lost on where to start. Also if you're planning ahead and just starting to consider a future move into industrial science, then this guide might just help you navigate that path. □

REVIEWED BY TOM BRANSON

Tom Branson recently completed a research position in the Netherlands and moved to his dream job in industry. He blogs at www.chemicallycultured.com