

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

When Bill Clinton was running for the US presidency in 1992, he focused on getting the top job with a campaign mantra coined by his strategist James Carville: "The economy, stupid!" Researchers looking to work in the biotechnology industry during the next year might consider adapting that refrain to "the pipeline, scientist!" in the light of consultants Ernst & Young's recent publication *Beyond Borders: Global Biotechnology Report 2007*.

Because the money available for start-ups and initial public offerings has decreased in recent years, the safest bet for finding a reasonably stable job in the sector is to target companies that have multiple products in different stages of development. Companies with at least one product approved for marketing are a safer bet than those without any. Of course, nothing is certain in a volatile sector — the number of mergers and acquisitions in the sector could well increase during the next 12 months, partly driven by drug companies that face expiring patents on some of their top performers.

But despite the uncertainties, biotech chief executives seem sanguine about job opportunities and growth. Global employment in the sector rose 30% to 190,500 between 2005 and 2006. Most of these workers (130,600) are based in the United States. Chief executives surveyed by Ernst & Young expect this growth to continue: 94% said they were likely or very likely to increase employment in the next two years.

But even with the projected hiring increase, there are still risks to weigh. Outsourcing in both sales and clinical trials is also expected to increase, and although mergers and acquisitions will usually bolster a company's finances, they tend to result in job cuts. By studying reports such as that from Ernst & Young, and then assessing indicators such as the state of the pipeline, and the number of patents and products already on the market, scientists can make smart choices about which jobs to go for. That could see them working in an industry that shows signs of growing towards profitability, a trend that should also mean greater job security.

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