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Making the match

Communication. It's one of those vague yet lofty skills that scientific recruiters say are important, but few define, and fewer still can present concrete examples. In a survey of 77 scientists in academia, biotech and pharma, all emphasized the importance of communication skills and provided examples of putting them into practice, both to get a foot in the door (see *Naturejobs* Recruiters & Industry, page 1128) and to manage an interview (see next month's *Nature Biotechnology*).

Whatever the setting, the all scientists surveyed by Grace Wong, founder and chief scientific officer of Massachusetts biotech company ActoKine Therapeutics, and founder and president of the biotech education organization Student Vision, emphasized the importance of matching their skills with an employer's needs. Juerg Meier, executive director of Novartis in Basel, Switzerland, says the big mistake in an interview is over-emphasizing your own objectives. To counter that, advises Thomas Kindt, director of the Division of Intramural Research at the US National Institutes of Health, you should show willingness to work towards an institution's mission.

Of course, knowing what an institution's mission is requires another key step — preparation. David Baltimore, president of the California Institute of Technology, says interviewees should be ready to discuss the full range of implications of both their own and the interviewer's work. Paul Kassner, an Amgen research scientist, advises giving a practice seminar to peers inside and outside your area of expertise. Answering potential questions from friends and colleagues helps you prepare for the real thing — but in order to anticipate those questions, you must research the company's history and the contributions of its scientific staff.

Following these steps will turn communication from a soft, abstract concept into a reality that can help you land the next job.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor



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