

GRADUATE JOURNAL

A hard day's night

What is it that makes me get up early in the morning after too little sleep? When the previous day was spent wrestling with another failed experiment, and cutting short phone calls home for another bunch of articles that needed to be read? It's strange, but I can't answer straight away.

Making science work — even at a basic level like in my graduate research projects — is attractive to much more than my intellect. The lab is the place where I spend most of the day and part of the night as well. My colleagues are the first people I share my thoughts with. It's hard to explain this level of engagement and involvement to others outside my little research universe. But sometimes it's pivotal to face the truth: doing research converts me into an egoist who chases ideas and results, and thereby forgets about time and society.

Despite the intensity of my lab life, it is a relief to have some people outside who I can't talk to about the stuff that occupies me the whole day. They wouldn't understand a word about what I spend most of my time doing. So in the end it's this ignorance that saves me and makes my day. It's this small preserve outside science that gives me time to recharge and get up in the morning to start off to the lab for another long day. ■

Tobias Langenhan is a first-year graduate student in neuroscience at the University of Oxford, UK.

Networking for introverts

For most scientists, spending solitary hours pursuing research is a common and comfortable endeavour. So, what to do about the suggestion that networking is a 'must do' activity for a successful career progression? Surely there must be a way around it?

The way around it is through it. Like their business counterparts, professionals in the research community need to shape their work lives, create their own opportunities and build relationships to accomplish their goals. In this process, introverts are sometimes undervalued and overlooked. With an estimated 75% of job offers and the majority of career advancement resulting from some form of networking, it's a role too central to success to disregard.

The key to networking is to find an approach you



With Deb Koen
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can follow in your own way and in your own time.

Adapting the process to suit your style, while adopting practices that alleviate the associated stress, will allow you to get the most out of networking. Introversion can actually be a benefit, when applied judiciously. Your conciseness and clarity will be highly prized, particularly by people who have been subjected to an extrovert's seeming disregard for time and boundaries.

In large group networking events, a practised introduction will pave the way for smooth

encounters. Remember to make eye contact and prepare written scripts beforehand to ease your way through conversations. Your audience will appreciate the active listening skills that tend to come naturally to introverts. Following your strengths and trusting the process will allow you to be more in control, to make new discoveries and to boost your confidence.

Celebrate small successes whenever you push yourself out of your comfort zone. The magic of networking is that although you can't predict exactly how or when your efforts will bear fruit, there will be moments of insight and times of connection. Sometimes the people who have no obvious connection to your career end up being especially helpful and taking a sincere interest in your progress. ■

Deb Koen is vice-president of Career Development Services and a columnist for *The Wall Street Journal's CareerJournal.com*.

MOVERS

Deepak Srivastava, director, Gladstone Institute of Cardiovascular Disease, San Francisco



An overnight sailing trip helped Deepak Srivastava to plot a course for his scientific career. Brad Thompson, his mentor at medical school, took the newly minted MD out on his boat to celebrate Srivastava's graduation.

The dark calm of the night sea provided Srivastava with an opportunity to chart his future. "It was one of those

discussions you have with no lights or no electricity," Srivastava says. "I asked Brad if he were a young hotshot, which direction would he take."

Thompson replied that looking at pluripotent cells — cells that can differentiate into many other types — would be a major growth area. His prophecy would ring true years later when human embryonic stem cells were cultivated.

Srivastava experienced another moment of clarity during a stint as a paediatric resident at the University of California, San Francisco. "I really enjoyed taking care of infants with heart disease," Srivastava says. "The cells didn't get told to do the right things, so it took me back to my initial research interest."

Those two moments of insight combined to lead Srivastava into a research training programme for paediatric scientists. This allowed him

to focus on the lab, with no need for teaching, grant-writing or making clinical rounds.

Since then, Srivastava has primarily worked on how precursor cells become heart cells — first based in Boston, then at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. At the latter, he met Eric Olson, another key mentor with whom he has continued to collaborate after they both moved to the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

At the helm of the Gladstone Institute of Cardiovascular Disease at the University of California, San Francisco, Srivastava will be able to take a genetic and developmental-biology approach to heart disease, including examining the role of gene regulation and cell differentiation in heart disease. San Francisco is an especially good place to tackle these problems, he says — especially as California recently voted to fund stem-cell research. ■

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