

naturejobs

**JOBS OF
THE WEEK**

About 900 young scientists came to seek careers advice at The Source last week, an event in London sponsored by *Naturejobs*. In response, expert panellists emphasized that, as well as seeking external advice from those with experience, it is just as important to look inwards to ask yourself what kind of project, collaboration and field you want to join.

For instance, in an earlier session on alternative careers that I chaired, two panellists said that they knew before leaving graduate school that academia wasn't for them. Franck Tetaz, a partner in a French patent-protection firm, joked that it was the repeated breakage of beakers and test tubes that convinced him that he shouldn't be a chemist. Fraser Campbell also knew he wasn't meant for the tenure track when he began wondering about the real-world outcomes of research. He found them in the business world, first as a biotech analyst and now in corporate finance.

Both were quick to point out that there are parts of their jobs they don't enjoy. For Tetaz, it's dealing with an in-tray stacked high with legal documents. For Campbell, it's grappling with spreadsheets. But the upside for both is being exposed to a variety of scientific problems and looking for real-world solutions that might result in products.

So at The Source, I told the young researchers to ask themselves what they enjoy most and least about their scientific lives. Graduate students and postdocs sometimes forget that activities such as writing a grant, supervising lab workers, ordering equipment and searching the literature are as legitimate examples of doing science as performing experiments. Specializing in any one of those activities can itself provide a satisfying scientific career. Once you identify what you enjoy doing and are good at, questions about which sector, discipline and part of the world you're interested in tend to resolve themselves.

Paul Smaglik was editor of *Naturejobs* from 2001 to 2007.

Correction

In the Regions feature 'Enter the dragon' (*Nature* **449**, 502-504; 2007), we quoted Yi Yinfa as saying that the curriculum at the Shenzhen Virtual University Park is determined in a "market oriented" fashion. This quote should in fact have been attributed to the university park's director, Qiu Xuan.

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