

naturejobs

**JOBS OF
THE WEEK**

Job mobility is a key trait for anyone pursuing a career in science. A willingness to switch disciplines, change labs, relocate to a different country or move between the worlds of academia and business can be crucial to success. But for many, that last transition can prove to be fairly problematic.

In Britain, for example, biomedical scientists face several barriers should they consider moving from academia to industry, according to a report from the Academy of Medical Sciences (www.acmedsci.ac.uk). The problem is fuelled in part by fears among academics that a move into business will rob them of some autonomy and divorce them from academic networks. This in turn is caused by a lack of information — both about what life in business is like and about the opportunities that exist in the industrial sector. Among the solutions to this information gap, the report suggests organizing introductory programmes to allow academics to gain industrial experience, and an increase in 'industry open days' at universities.

The importance of these sectors getting to know one another better is emphasized by the Science, Technology and Industry Scoreboard released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) last month. This shows that 3.9 million people in OECD countries were working in research and development in 2005. Of these, a significant proportion were in the business sector: 80% in the United States, 66% in Japan and 50% in the European Union. And in China, the number of researchers working in the business sector has risen by 15% per year for the past five years.

But the OECD figures also reveal that flexibility and mobility between disciplines and across borders are growing in importance. There were five times more scientific papers with international co-authors in 2005 compared with 1985. This globalization of science means that young researchers have greater opportunities. It offers them broader scope for finding their favoured living conditions and ideal collaborations — as long as they have the wherewithal to make the move.

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