

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

It takes time, effort and no small amount of talent to successfully complete postgraduate and postdoctoral studies. But the next step in a scientific career — a faculty position — comes with a fresh round of challenges. Unlike mastering a new lab technique, there is no ready-made instruction manual for learning how to manage and run a lab for the first time.

This issue was addressed late last month by Matthias Haury, training manager at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Heidelberg, Germany, when he spoke at a *Naturejobs* careers conference in London. Haury offered advice on how to approach the setting up of a new lab. First and foremost, he said, you need to think about the big picture. Examine the academic and science enterprise structure of the country where you plan to base your lab — funding and policy issues may affect a lab's long-term future and near-term struggles. In addition, Haury said, you need to vet all of the elements that could affect the lab's productivity, from grant and equipment availability to core facilities — even water quality is worth checking as it could affect experimental outcomes.

Another key step, Haury noted, is to draw up your budget before you begin. This needs to include consumables and small lab equipment, as well as having some room for contingencies. Then you need to work out who to recruit. Quality rather than quantity of staff is important — although Haury said that he has had more success with applicants with creative CVs and unconventional backgrounds rather than just stellar grades. Above all, personal rapport is key.

Lab-management courses can be helpful, such as those offered by the European Molecular Biology Organization or the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (see *Nature* **451**, 740–741; 2008). But Haury emphasized the route to success involves maximizing your “personal impact factor” by speaking at meetings, publishing and writing reviews. The better this impact factor, the better your networking opportunities and grant possibilities — and the better the chances that you will attract superb staff.

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