

Reflections on a Career in Industry

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What I Wish I Had Known

...before leaving academe to work in industry

- Based on my own experiences and my observations of challenges faced by new employees
 - Companies are complex organizations with simple objectives
 - New employees coming from graduate school need to be aware of the differences in culture, climate, decision drivers, measures of success
- My top 4 “wish I had known” topics



Business Basics

- Useful for faculty entrepreneurs as well as corporate employees
- Understand the difference between academic and business missions – research as an end vs. a means
 - UIDP Publication: Guiding Principles for University-Industry Endeavors
 - http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/uidp/PGA_055253
- Decisions are based on the “bottom line”
- Resources: books, business school classes, speakers from local business, alumni



Teamwork

- Getting a doctorate is all about independence and individual achievement
- Most high tech businesses use teams to develop, manufacture, and market products
 - Improve speed and efficiency by distributing tasks to people with appropriate expertise or experience
 - Too much independence is inefficient, even counterproductive
- Resources: industry-sponsored research projects



Safety

- Accidents can have significant consequences for companies - legal, financial, public relations, employee morale, et al.
 - Failure to follow safety rules can result in job loss
- Safety involves behavior and attitude – both are important
 - Behavior can be learned
 - Attitude is hard to change
 - Faculty members are role models – positive or negative
- Resources: professional societies, alumni in industry, university safety department



Globalization

- High tech companies operate in a global environment
 - Competition
 - Markets
 - Manufacturing and distribution
 - Resources
- Work teams may be global; requires flexibility in how work gets done
 - Teleconferences, data sharing, delegation, international travel, remote supervision
- Resources: remote collaborations, international exchanges
 - e.g., ACS GREET Program – Global Research, Experiences, Exchanges and Training

In Conclusion

- By providing information or opportunities related to business principles, teamwork, safety, and globalization you can help your students to:
 - Be aware of the differences between working in academia and industry
 - Get off to a faster start in an industrial research career
 - Avoid missteps that could be career limiting - all of the topics covered are used to evaluate employee performance , and make compensation and promotion decisions

Questions & Discussion