

How to Find a Job in 10 (to 180) Days

If you were overwhelmed by your search for a residency or fellowship, hang on to your pager because looking for a more permanent position is twice the stress and half the fun! Many resources are available for becoming a great candidate for postgraduate training opportunities. The application process is quite streamlined, and there is very little flexibility and input in the day-to-day responsibilities of the position. However, searching, applying, and preparing for a “real” job is much more difficult. Perhaps it is because you know that the position will not end in 12 months. Rather, it is PERMANENT (as in never-ending) and, as I said before, REAL. You’ll need to understand benefits, such as vacation days that you can actually use; vision insurance, which you’ll need after reading countless journal articles throughout the year; and 401(k) plans. My co-residents and I have trudged through this process successfully, and so can you and your residency colleagues!

My search was prolonged, but that is because I was seeking a set position that was not restricted to a particular geographic location. My search ended shortly before I finished my residency and was accompanied by a sense of relief. The following are some thoughts on helping you successfully search for a position as well.

Be Prepared; Then Relax

“Be prepared” is the Boy Scout motto, which I embraced as a Boy Scout and continue to embrace, as evidenced by the extensive research I do with every purchase I make. You already have a very particular set of skills; skills that you have acquired over a very short career. Skills that make you a dream for employers. Now, prioritize what you want in your first “real” job. You can shoot for the moon, but know that you are not going to obtain everything you want right off the bat. Organizing your priorities and researching positions will help you be prepared.

What if you don’t have the skills for the position you desire? If research is a focus of a potential job opportunity, can you take classes part-time to help develop your skills? Do you have the necessary training to develop a clinical practice? Are you prepared to pursue that job at an academic site while maintaining a clinical practice? Seek out additional training opportunities, mentoring, and resources from professional organizations to help develop these skills.

Once you are prepared, you can relax. During my first search for a position, I was the calmest of all the residents in my class that were not seeking additional training. Unlike those with the typical Pharm.D. genetic makeup, I am generally quite laid-back and believe that everything works out in the end if you prepare appropriately. My other co-residents were *a bit* more high-strung and treated every interview and application as the end of the world. Relax, we all survived Y2K without a hitch. Breathe more and worry less.

Be Patient and Open-minded

Patience is a virtue, but it doesn’t pay back your student loans. Consider that budgets for institutions, including in academia, are released at different times of the year and sometimes at multiple times of the year. Understanding when these times occur may help as you seek employment. Examples include in the spring for hospitals, because their fiscal year may begin in summer versus winter, and in the winter for academic institutions, because their fiscal year may begin in late spring to early summer. Therefore, a colleague of yours may acquire a position 6 months before you do. Stay the course, my friend!

At the same time, remain open to new opportunities. For example, I had experience in large academic teaching hospitals but minimal experience in community hospitals. Nevertheless, I felt prepared to make the leap to a much smaller community hospital, which ended up being a great learning experience. Keeping an open mind helped me research many different types of positions. I

knew what I wanted, but I also understood that I might not get it all. You may get something even better than what you thought you wanted!

Use Your Resources Wisely

As a student pharmacist, I kept hearing that “pharmacy is such a small world,” but I did not believe it, not one bit. Have you seen the number of pharmacists attending large national meetings? Now, however, a few years into my career, I am starting to realize that pharmacy is indeed a small world. Speak with your ever-growing network, your program director, and your alma mater to find the available positions.

Unfortunately, there is no single repository for all pharmacy-related jobs. Therefore, don’t depend on only one source. I used the ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting as a guide to find the available positions but did not rely on it as a “be-all, end-all.” I also created e-mail alerts through professional organizations to be sent weekly to my inbox. I then turned to job search sites because of a co-resident’s tip. This allowed me to continually keep track of new offerings and share opportunities with my colleagues. I also used professional pharmacy organizations (e.g., AACP, ACCP, ASHP), job search sites (e.g., Indeed.com), and personal communication.

The job search process taught me a lot about different opportunities and how to obtain them. I hope you share your path with future generations to help them identify their goals, adjust those goals to reality, and embrace the process. My entire residency class found jobs shortly after our residency ended, and I am sure that you and your class will do the same!

About the author: Adrian Wong is a second-year fellow in outcomes research and pharmacy informatics at Brigham and Women’s Hospital/MCPHS University in Boston, Massachusetts. He is currently on job search No. 2 and loving every moment of it. His passions include running more in a day than most people typically drive.