

Professional Development Notes: Professor Joseph Biello

November 15, 2006

After grad school, Professor Biello wasn't sure where to go so he applied to several management consulting positions. This proved to be the most useful because it gave him the opportunity to talk to non-academics who were results orientated (forcing him to cut to the chase). From this experience he learned the importance of sound-bytes.

His suggestion for preparing for interviews, prepare a series of sound-bytes/ sales-pitches:

- 2 minute talk: cursory, general information that you can discuss when meeting someone in the hall.
- 10 minute talk, - for someone that's interested in seeing a bit more details.
- 1 hour talk – job talk

It's important to prepare these and do them well. Have these memorized, be able to speak about your research in this method no matter where/when you are asked. Don't prepare them for experts in the field; they should be general and accessible by all.

How does these sound-bytes translate to research statements?

Consider writing your statement concisely in 1 page (3 paragraphs) using a style that is analogous to the 2min/10min/1hour talks approach. Boil down all the thoughts to an essence that captures a broad, intelligent audience. Think of it like eating an onion, starting on the inside. Every layer tastes the same but at each new layer you get a bit more of the same great taste.

Use a logical progression. To start, define yourself and create interest, let them know how great you are! This is your chance to create an advertisement for yourself by starting with a precise abstract about that navigates readers through the larger paper (like the 2 minute talk). This gets the readers involved so you can entice them to navigate through the rest of the paper (10min talk). The point that you're going for is to have them put you in the read again pile. So Do it and DO it again.

Should the statement start with history of the research area? No. It's better to emphasize yourself & your personal contributions, incorporate history later on. Recall- you should cut to the chase and catch them right away (they have 100+ to read). Think about your audience, those who know this research area really well will skip the history and those who don't will get mixed up/slowed down by the history and never make it to your results. Most people don't read far into your statement hit them fast and hard

How do we talk about our contributions to a field when as graduate students many of use are only doing a bit-part of a bit-part of the field? We all always working on a bit-part of a bit-part but in the process of doing that we accumulate a repertoire of knowledge. As grad students we've learned SO MANY things, put this in context and emphasize your skills: "I am proficient in these things...." Emphasize these things in your gotcha blurb.

History of Professor Biello

In 2001 He received a PhD in Astrophysics from University of Chicago. He then did a 3-year VIGRE post-doc in the math department at RPI (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute). The RPI position led him to a 2-year position at the Courant Institute at NYU that eventually brought him to Davis.

There's 2 ways to get a position, you'll want to approach them differently:

- Apply to departments that have open positions
- Find someone specific that you want to work with. Ask them. Do you have money? Having money makes it easier to work with someone.

After applying you have to count on luck. Also, think about where you want to live. Don't apply somewhere that you don't want to live. This is more important for faculty positions that are long term versus post-doc positions that are temporary.

What was it like to switch fields?

It's easier to make the switch if you're a known entity, use your adviser to help with this process. The other way is to weasel your way in: take classes, help people and work to find letters of recommendation from people in the new field who think you'd be successful

Realize- we're always applying and it's become such a process that we forget the piles of applications that are out there that someone has to read. We can't guarantee that they'll read it. We just want to get in the 2nd glance pile.

Professor Biello would be happy to read your statement. Let him know.