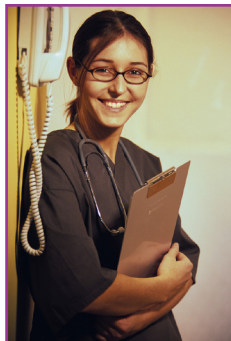




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Finding a Biotech Internship

[By Akbar Ali]

One of the oldest and most frequently utilized methods of getting started in any industry is the professional internship. Not only does an internship give you hands-on experience, but it exposes you to the daily workings of the industry you are interested in and helps you find out if you are in fact making the right choice. After all, some careers sound interesting on paper, but once your down in the trenches working with seasoned professionals and established companies, you might realize that it isn't the right career choice.

Another added benefit to taking up an internship is that it allows you to make those vital contacts which will help propel you into those beginner positions which hopefully lead to bigger and better things. It has been estimated that up to 40% of all jobs are found through networking and professional referrals; an internship will help you acquire both regardless of the industry you end up in. Also, many companies which offer internships will hire right out of the intern pool if they are satisfied with your work and have appropriate openings.

So, how does one find a good biotech internship? Read on.

The first thing you need to know is that finding an internship, while not an impossible task by any means, is not always easy. There are always a large number of applicants for any available position; thus, it always behooves you to approach your search with the right expectations. If you don't land your first internship, don't be discouraged. Many factors will play into how easy or difficult it is for you to get your foot in the door: academic and professional experience, college major, GPA, extracurricular work, and even your projected attitude can affect the company's decision to accept you. Applying for an internship is just like applying for a job.

Also, there are factors which may be out of your control, such as industry trends or

the reputation of the school you graduated from. For example, graduates of my alma mater, Chicago's Northwestern University, typically take less than a month to find an internship or entry level job after graduation, regardless of their degree. Students from a large state school, however, like the University of Florida, typically take between two and five months depending on their field of study.

There are seven key steps you need to take when searching for a biotech internship.

Step 1: Research! It's biotech, right? So get used to searching and studying. Explore which segment of the biotech industry most appeals to your scientific interests and professional ambitions. You'll be surprised to learn how expansive the biotech industry really is. You can do anything from researching the effects of cancer drugs at a university to developing stain resistant carpet with DuPont.

Step 2: Find out what type of responsibilities are involved with specific careers. One thing you'll discover quickly as you enter the field of biotech is that it is *much* more than looking into a microscope. Talk to professors at your university who have worked in the industry or contact local companies and see if they have recruiters willing to discuss what specific positions are like.

Step 3: Requirements. Here's a surprising fact: not all biotech jobs require that you have any post-high school education. Most, of course, do, and with the increasingly competitive nature of the business you should expect to find companies interested in candidates with long sheepskins, but if you're looking to just get that first on-the-job experience, you don't always have to have a Ph.D. after your name.

Step 4: Resources. Go to the [National Health Museum website](#) and click on the links to biotech positions. Plus, you'll find tons of information on what experienced industry leaders have to say about their specialties, like bio-organic chemistry, food science, pharmaceutical formulation, and environmental health and safety.

Step 5: To relocate or not to relocate? That is the question. You might not have thought about it, but not all regions of the country offer equal numbers of biotech jobs and internships. As you might expect, there will be tons more in major metropolitan areas like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles than there will be in Boise, Idaho, or Green Bay, Wisconsin. If you aren't near a large city with a major research university, you will probably have to move.

Step 6: The Internet. One of the best ways to find an internship is to go through the websites of established biotech companies



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and to send them an email or to call them directly and ask about openings. Keep in mind that not all internships are paid, and frequently the ones which are paid don't pay all that much. Make sure you find out

all compensation details before making any commitment, especially if it involves relocating. Also, many times the best resource on the biotech industry is your local college or university.

Step 7: Give yourself between six and nine months to get an internship. It's perfectly fine to get one while you're in school or after you graduate, but it can take a while, so plan accordingly.

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