TIBBS Career Blitz – January 2011

Career Profile of Biotech Researcher, Suraj Dhungana

What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?
Currently I hold a position of Scientist/Project Manager at Tandem Labs RTP (A Labcorp Company). Tandem Labs RTP used to be Bioanalytical Division of Enthalpy Analytical Inc. until June 2010. I have been in this position for the past 2 years.

Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?
I received my Ph.D. from Duke University' Chemistry Department. My focus area was bio-analytical/bio-inorganic chemistry.

Did you do a postdoc? Where?
I have completed two postdoctoral level training. I was a Director’s postdoctoral Fellow at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), NM for 2 years. At LANL my research focused on bioremediation and environmental metal mobilization. My second postdoctoral training was at the National Institute of Environmental Health Science (NIEHS). My research at NIEHS focused on biomarker discovery innate immune response and in autoimmune disease.

What are your main daily responsibilities?
On a daily basis, I serve as a single point of contact for clients, manage budget and revenue recognition, develop business by presenting at trade shows and scientific meetings, and evaluate new technologies to expand company’s service portfolio. Scientifically, I am responsible for managing bio-analytical programs to support clients’ drug development and discovery activities, and building new capabilities while training junior scientists.

What are the keys to success in your career field?
In a CRO (Contract Research Organization), there are five key things required to be successful: 1) ability to multi-task 2) assume multiple responsibility of diverse natures, 3) work under pressure and meet tight deadlines, 4) excel as a team leader and player, and 5) have a good sense for business development.

What were the most important factors in choosing your career path?
Timing and geographical location were the key to choosing the current career path.

What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?
CRO work requires a lot a collective effort from several groups of people. Ability to work together with a diverse group people is critical in a CRO setting. There is no room or time for personal pride. One should have the attitude of ‘Get good work, do good work and make good money for the company’. If you have an adaptive personality and if you work well in group setting, then you will do well at a CRO setting.
Links for more information:

Careers in Biotech and Pharma: The Right Fit
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2007_04_27/science.opms.r0700031

Mythbusting for Academics: Considering a Job in Biotech/Pharma
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2010_04_23/science.opms.r1000088